Aikyatha

A quarterly journal of
Student Christian Movement of India

2015
January - March

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Editors' note

The Student Christian Movement of India is initiating a historical footstep in its century-long history by presenting *Aikyatha*, the official journal of the Movement with a new face and approach. *Aikyatha* has played a major role in shaping the Indian ecumenical movement, especially the student community through its powerful theological and ideological responses and interactions. *Student Outlook*, which was the initial form of *Aikyatha*, had been a faith oriented journal that made the youth and students to understand Christian faith in the contemporary socio-political scenario. In 1954, *Aikya* replaced the *Student Outlook* by thrusting a new magnitude to the Indian ecumenical sphere. In 1976, *Aikya* was renamed as *Aikyatha*, which has always been a mirror of time. *Aikyatha* daringly nurtured the newly emerged political and theological discourses of 1970s, such as liberation theology and the protests of the poor within and outside the churches. *Aikyatha* has been the official tongue of students who vehemently joined for justice and peace in Indian soil by challenging the forces of anti-democracy and communalism.

For decades, *Aikyatha* stood as the third eye of the Indian socio-political life and challenged the Christian community to think and act through relevant and contextual Christian ministry. Therefore, SCM India is committed to continue its historical mission through *Aikyatha* by addressing the issues that challenges our nation. The primary readers of *Aikyatha* are from the Christian community and we think it is our mission to bring them to the secular space of the country to participate in the struggles for a fuller humanity. We also invite the secular public to indulge in dialogue and engage with various Christian social movements to find a common space where we can fight for justice and democracy.

We are proudly presenting the new phase of *Aikyatha*, the quarterly journal of SCMI, for a wider reading and dialogue. We hope that it would provide a greater medium for students and youth to understand the current Indian social life and to lead a relevant Christian journey. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the students, office bearers and staffs of SCMI to make this dream come true. We also expect the suggestions, disagreements and criticisms to make the journal more significant and exceptional.

Dr. AJ Anandan
Managing Editor

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CONTENTS

Thirty years after Bhopal: Six historical mistakes
Satinath Sarangi 06

Understanding Social Movements
Medha Patkar 09

The Questions We Should Be Asking Frequently About the Land Acquisition Act
Usha Ramanathan 12

Ghar Wapsi: The invitation of fascism
TM Yesudasan 17

Ninan Koshy: A Man for Such a Time As This
Jesudas M Athyal 20

Paris, Peshawar And Boko Haram- Religion, Politics And Violence
Ram Puniyani 26

Nationalisation of Education
George Alex 29

CONTENTS

34 Transphobia as a form of Brahminism
Gee Ameena Suleiman
Kaveri Karthik

41 Down Town to Kiss of Love: Problems of Public Reasoning
Ajith Kumar AS / K Ashraf

48 Thoughts on health in the Indian context
Biji Jacob Oommen

52 PK- The Curious Case of a Secular Modern Alien
Nikhila Hentry

56 Annihilate Homophobia
George Zachariah

58 Srilanka: Post election scenario
Selvaraj Arulnathan

64 Embodying Prophetic Leadership
Jennifer Bailey

Editorial

The Student Christian movement of India (SCMI), with its profound and proud prophetic legacy, has been able to influence generations of students and youth with its faith in a liberative God in Jesus Christ and a strong commitment to the ideals of justice, peace, and integrity of creation, for more than a century. As a faith driven movement, SCM India has always strived to articulate Christian faith in a socially relevant and politically pertinent manner. Reading the signs of our times and interpreting them from a liberative perspective has been an integral aspect of SCM ministry in India. The conviction that genuine social action is grounded in critical social analysis has shaped the praxis orientation of SCM India all these years.

The old context of direct imperialism has now been supplanted by new empires such as the project of economic globalization with its Corporate logic that is exercising absolute sway over human life. The market driven neo-liberal economic policies have resulted in widening the gap between the poor and the rich all over the world. In India, the forces of the new Capital have entered into an unholy nexus with the forces of Casteism. The alliance between the evangelists of globalization and cultural nationalism in India has disastrous consequences for the poor and the downtrodden, especially the subaltern communities such as Dalits and indigenous communities. Education is an important sector where the negative ramifications of this unholy marriage are particularly felt in the form of commercialization and saffronization of education. Crass capitalism and ecologically insensitive development models, themselves integral aspects of globalization, have also resulted in mass migration and displacement of people, especially indigenous communities. Bhopal gas tragedy, the worst ever industrial tragedy that took place thirty years ago, is a case in point that can speak volumes about development that is devoid of a human and cosmic face. Nuclear threats seem to loom large in today's context. Koodamkulam is one such disaster in the making. Whilst old forms of discrimination such as Casteism, racism, sexism and classism still operate in overt and covert forms, new forms of

marginalization have come about, some of them even assuming fascist dimensions as being manifest today in Brahminic and upper caste projects such as "Khar Wapsi", attempts to ban beef eating, moral policing, violence against sexual minorities, growing intolerance towards new social movements and novel expressions of dissent and protest and so on. Communalization and criminalization of politics and growing phenomenon of religious fundamentalism are also pausing great threats to the ideals of democracy and secularism in India. These issues and many more are dealt with in this issue of *Aikyatha* by various organic thinkers. All these have ramifications for students and youth in particular as they confront these realities on day to day basis at a very young age.

SCM India through *Aikyatha* is making a humble effort to respond to this challenge by relaunching this medium with a new face and new vision. *Aikyatha*, as our readers are well aware, used to be a channel of SCM India to disseminate news and information about the movement. However, we are more than convinced that *Aikyatha* in the contemporary scenario has a greater mission to accomplish, that is to function as a channel that would seek to read and make sense of the contemporary signs, primarily from the perspective of students and youth. We are happy that we could launch *Aikyatha* in its new incarnation on the International Women's Day and it is our hope that it will enjoy wide readership. My thanks and appreciation go to the leadership of SCM India, especially to Dr. A. J. Anandan, Acting General Secretary, the entire staff team and colleagues for making it a reality. I would like to particularly thank Mr. Shibi Peter, Executive Secretary for Political and International Desk not only for initiating this innovative idea but also for working hard to bring it to fruition. SCM India also expresses it's deep sense of gratitude to all those who have contributed to this issue of Aikyatha through their articles.

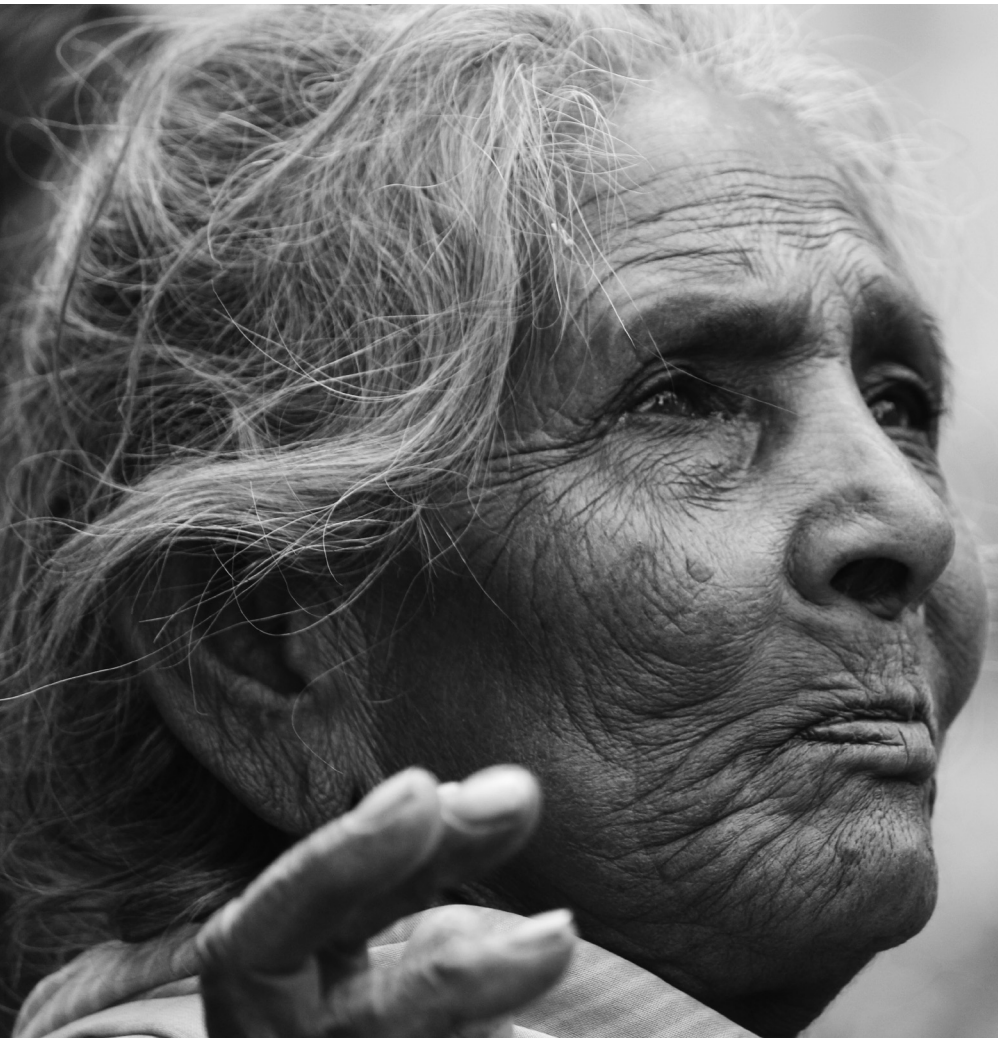
Geevarghese Coorilos
Chairperson, SCM India

30 years after BHOPAL Six historical mistakes

SATINATH SARANGI

It is 30 years since that horrific night of toxic terror in Bhopal whose effects linger on till this day. The facts are chilling: 23,000 dead and counting, 150,000 battling chronic illnesses; tuberculosis and cancers rampant amongst the affected people; tens of thousands of children born after the disaster carrying marks of the poisons of the US multinational Union Carbide, the principal author of the gas disaster on the night of 2-3 December 1984. ICMR reports, hospital records and scientific papers by individual researchers are replete with evidence of what the disaster has left in its wake. The tragedy has continued to unfold. In 1996, there was more poison detected as emanating from the Union Carbide plant, the pesticide factory abandoned after the disaster was detected to be contaminating the ground water with toxic chemicals. It reached 3.5 km from the site and depths greater than 30 metres in October 2012, and continues to spread and find new victims even as this is being written.

There was a severe underestimation of the effects of the disaster when the Welfare Commissioner construed 93 per cent of those exposed to Union Carbide's gases in Bhopal as having suffered only 'temporary injury', in denial of the chronicity of effects experienced by the victims. In the scheme of medical categorization followed in Bhopal, close to 70 per cent of the exposed people were not acknowledged as having suffered a disability because, according to bureaucratic understanding, they were not gainfully employed and so suffered no income loss due to injury! Three important tests for assessment of exposure-related injury —pulmonary function test, exercise tolerance test and urinary thiocyanate —were administered on less than 20 per cent of those examined. While Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) study reported 30 per cent of survivors



In 2001, Union Carbide Corporation became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Company. And Dow Chemicals claims it only took over the assets of UCC and has nothing to do with the liabilities, and so will have nothing to do with the toxicity created by UCC in Bhopal. Successive governments have had a significant role in the creation of the situation as it is in Bhopal today.

with mental illnesses attributable to the disaster, not a single affected person was examined for mental illness. Gynaecological examinations were simply not done. ICMR reported more than 10,000 cases of burnt out lungs, but the process of medical categorization yielded only 42 persons in the severest category of injury among the over half million exposed persons. Meanwhile, in 2001, Union Carbide Corporation became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Company. And Dow Chemicals claims it only took over the assets of UCC and has nothing to do with the liabilities, and so will have nothing to do with the toxicity created by UCC in Bhopal. Successive governments have had a significant role in the creation of the situation as it is in Bhopal today.

There is abundant evidence in the story of the Bhopal disaster that illustrates how bureaucratic mistakes, to use a euphemism, stemming from individual and collective lack of will, understanding, integrity, courage and most of all empathy have caused massive injustice and denial of basic rights in Bhopal.

Consider these six mistakes: One, in February 1989, the settlement that the Supreme Court endorsed was for a compensation of US $470 million. The scale of the disaster as it has unfolded has finally forced an admission that the US $470 million that UCC and its subsidiary paid was unconscionably meagre. On 3 December 2010, a full 26 years after the disaster, the central government filed a curative petition in the Supreme Court seeking additional compensation from Union Carbide and Dow Chemical for the gas disaster of 1984. This petition includes a claim for environmental remediation, alongside the enhancement of compensation, thus carelessly conflating the disaster with the contamination of the soil and water. These were two wrongs, deserving two distinct consequences; yet, in the curative petition, the government distorts its case by ignoring the distinction.

Second, it was a big mistake not to have sought extradition of Union Carbide's authorised representative, which was for the Central Bureau of Investigation to do in its role as the prosecutor. Even such halfhearted attempts as were made between 2003 and 2009 to extradite the for-

UCIL pesticide plant from where gas leaked - AFP

The six "mistakes" listed above are not all that is wrong with the government's response to the disaster in Bhopal; they are indicative of how much has gone wrong, and how much has to be set right 30 years after the disaster.

mer chairman, Warren Anderson, were not made towards bringing John McDonald, the secretary and authorized representative of Union Carbide, to trial. As for the Indian subsidiary, UCIL, and its officials, convicted of reduced charges that treated the incident as akin to a traffic accident, they are free, on bail, while their appeals against conviction lie unattended in court.

Three, National Institute for Research on Environmental Health (NIREH) was set up in Bhopal as the 31st centre of the ICMR, a welcome step. But employing the entire staff of the state government agency, Centre for Rehabilitation Studies, en masse, undermined the worth of NIREH. This staff had failed to follow up on 80 per cent of the cohort of exposed that the ICMR had initiated: an inexcusable lapse which an article in the Lancet last year termed "a missed scientific opportunity in Bhopal". The poor quality of staff has ensured that not a single project has been completed by NIREH in the last four years despite expenditure of over Rs. 15 crores.

Four, it was a terrible mistake on the part of the state government not to finalise last year's offer of the German technical assistance agency, GIZ, of transporting 350 tonnes of Union Carbide's hazardous waste from the Bhopal factory to Hamburg for safe disposal. The state government rejected this option for reasons that remain to be known. And the waste continues to lie in the abandoned factory site.

Five, it has proved to be a mistake to assign NEERI (National Environmental Engineering Research Institute) and NGRI (National Geophysical Research Institute) the work of scientific assessment of the depth and spread of toxic contamination of the soil and groundwater in and around the Bhopal factory site. The report prepared at a cost of Rs. 3 crores by these two government agencies, with its unreliable estimations and ridiculous recommendations, was thankfully rejected by the Peer Review Committee set up by the Ministry of Environment & Forests in 2011.

Six, entrusting the Madhya Pradesh government with the work of providing medical care, economic rehabilitation and social support to the victims of the disaster is a mistake as old as the disaster. Reports submitted by the Supreme Court appointed Monitoring Committee from 2005 onwards have highlighted the paucity of doctors, poor quality of medicines and the absence of treatment protocols at government-run hospitals. The situation is worse insofar as economic rehabilitation goes where the latest scandal reported in the press points to embezzlement of Rs. 18 crore and false claims of providing gainful employment to thousands of victims.

The six "mistakes" listed above are not all that is wrong with the government's response to the disaster in Bhopal; they are indicative of how much has gone wrong, and how much has to be set right 30 years after the disaster.

On 14 November 2014, the Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers agreed that the assessment of injuries, and of death, would be revisited on the basis of scientific evidence, including ICMR research data and hospital records.

This could be the beginning of a fair assessment of injuries caused by the disaster in place of the severely flawed 'medical categorisation' that was put in place 27 years ago. Thirty years after the disaster, this could be the start of correcting the multiple historical mistakes and would go a long way in minimising the injustice done to a people over three decades.

Satinath Sarangi *is an activist based in Bhopal for the past 30 years. He runs the Sambhavna Trust which offers free medical care to the chronically ill survivors and conducts research and documentation in Bhopal.* ***(Courtsy: The Statesman)***

Fr. Thomas Kocherry Memorial Lecture

Understanding **Social Movements**

Movements have to target social, economic and political change. Without that vision, we cannot have a movement. Many a times, the Hindi word *Andolan* is rather misused, applying it to a single program, But I have experienced with the Students Christian Movement, that you not only conduct conventions, but also participate in actions and discuss the framework, concepts and values of movements.

MEDHA PATKAR

We need to have a clear understanding, a conceptual framework for change,with a goal and a vision. It is not just about short-term actions, but a long-term process – not one goal after the other or one program after the other. I am talking about a process with special characteristics that would define a social movement.

What are the characteristics that define a movement? Primarily, it has to move, with the momentum of participants, creating a radiating effect on the politics of a society. That has to be well planned and thought out, but its also extemporaneous and unplanned. A single movement need not take up all issues, but we need a broader vision reflected in every issue that's taken up. This is the micro-macro linkage that all of us in the National Alliance of People's Movement - from Thomas Kocheri to Banwarilal Sharma - has been talking about. If we miss this linkage, and the broader guiding vision, then we would create organizations and not movements.

Mass base is essential for movements. Without this, talking of grassroot orientation appears to be pompous. This base comprises sections of the population who are facing the brunt of social, political and economic power. They, the Dalits, the Adivasis, the Working Class, the Unorganized sector and Women who want to bring about change that really matters. It is their vision of

change and the future they dream that provide clarity to movements. Therefore, it is this mass base that brings in empowerment.

An important characteristic of any movement is the attainment of this empowerment. This process has to be based on the framework of values, which the constitution of any country gives us; a framework of human values, and human rights that forms the basis of carrying on with a movement.

It is this belief in the vision of better humanity - that goes much beyond the legal and the constitutional - that gives us that spirit and strength to really face the worst that comes across in a movement's journey and move ahead. Therefore, perseverance is another special characteristic of a movement. I meet young people who say, "Madam we also want to start a new movement of youths." They are truly genuine and spirited with much more strength and urge than we elders. But, they see a movement as an upsurge, an action with a model that they have in mind. The model could be based on a particular issue or an experience. I would like to tell my young friends whom we look forward to as becoming leaders within the collective of a movement, don't take anything as a movement unless you have some idea of a struggle that needs perseverance. It is a battle challenging the system and subsystems.

Another characteristic of being in a movement is the ability to visualize. It gives you that faith not only in the immediate need for action but also faith in your commitment to that action. Without this ability to reflect and visualize, we cannot necessarily say that we are in a movement.

But that should not scare anyone. I am not saying that you wait and wait for a movement that really appeals to you. You can be a part of that struggle even if it is and extemporaneous response. After December 16 in Delhi, many young girls jumped into a street action. It was not necessarily a well thought out action with a plan. But coming out to the street against terrorism, against communal right, against atrocities committed against Dalits or women – that spirit can be a spark for a long-term movement.

Hence, we need not hesitate and say "but it just a one time action and why should I be there? I'm more committed to a long term movement, and that is the Narmada BachaoAndolan or SCM".

Movement is a very big word and a vision to really move at least a sizable section of population to take an action forward until change is achieved. It may just be a change in policies or laws on one hand, which are the formal expressions of our vision not just the vision of the state. It can also be just making the downtrodden sections feel empowered. We may not be able to see the scattered struggles of women, the dalits, the unorganized sector and of secular forces. But, we certainly believe there is a movement, a fraternity, brotherhood and sisterhood. This knowledge makes us feel we are a part of it. Therefore, people's organizations, youth organizations, and NGOs across categories occupy a space in processing change.

We may not be able to see the scattered struggles of women, the dalits, the unorganized sector and of secular forces. But, we certainly believe there is a movement, a fraternity, brotherhood and sisterhood. This knowledge makes us feel we are a part of it. Therefore, people's organizations, youth organizations, and NGOs across categories occupy a space in processing change.

We are faced with the question of how much social movements have achieved. But the real question is how hard are we trying and how much space we keep occupied? This is very important in the new context. We have to be there and keep occupying and not losing the space to the attacks that are likely to come. This is also a test for a movement. With all humility at our command, let us say that we the people in movements know that we matter. We must assert this.

We are the instrumental initiators in changing policies towards the real needy population. Whether, it is the Food Act, the PESA Act, the Hawkers Act, the Policy for the Fish Workers, the Unorganized Sector Workers Act or the Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation Act; these are some examples of people's achievements through movements. These Acts had to be penned. But very little has been written about the roles of the movements in the whole process. That needs to be done, to give us not just faith and not only credit but also a belief and confidence that movements do occupy space. It is also about how movements create space for those section of the population who have to be given primacy in defining our vision of development; the future path that this country, its democracy, its politics and its economy should take or should not take.

After a struggle, friends who are in movements sometimes feel they have lost or they have won. Many people within the Narmada struggle had already started believing that everything was over when it started again. The dam construction was stopped after that long 21 days fast in Delhi. But, today it has risen up beyond 120 meters and it has awakened us when it is going to be reaching the height of 139 meters. Now this is the kind of challenge that every movement faces. You have to understand that in order to take up that challenge, you need a strategic mix. A movement can never be on the same map or a graph, and it can never go ahead with the same target and the same description and the same kind of action. The struggle had to be expanded to exposing corruption, involving in court cases, building the mass base and going beyond Narmada into issues related to land, water and forests.

Therefore, whether in Manipur, the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, Plachimada in Kerala or Kudankulam

Aravind Kejriwal

While electoral politics has its role, non-electoral politics of people's movements has its role. At the most, we must try for further dialogue and further co-ordination amongst the two. You may or may not join Aam Admi Party. But movements should be able to contribute to that exercise of making a party's ideology clearer.Therefore, movements can help to usher in a new political force.

in Tamil Nadu, people in the movement- the core group and the buffer group - have to continuously keep on reviewing not only its vision but also strategies. Today we have many tools like social media and other networking models to use the best of technology. We have international alliances and fora that can come together in a moment of crisis. There are different ways for participation in our democratic process. Movements have to really select the right kind of strategies and make use of those.Mahatmaji's *Dandi Yatra* was much more thana program. It was a strategy to challenge imperialist forces. Today, movements require not just symbolic actions and not only networking and communications; they have to be a part of the people in their life and not just in the vision.

It's not just physically being with them or empathizing with them, its understanding the detailed social, political, and economic aspects of their problems and the challenging forces in front. The movements in this country did play a role in challenging the state, when the state certainly proved to be not only a non-welfare state but also an oppressing state. The movements cannot just go on saying weare empowering people, but they have to stand and take the state and system by its horns. That moment repeats itself and today we are in one such situation. The state does not want the urban poor housing scheme to be assured to slum dwellers, because that would make them lose their own vested interest. So, in every sector, we see how the state is responding or not responding. So movements have to keep thinking and rethinking strategies. How should the movement move up? When I say this, it doesn't mean just leaving a movement and joining a party. It means really going towards a new kind of politicization. In all humility, I would say that the time has not yet come to leave behind the politics of people's movement and fully jump for feathers orcaps.

While electoral politics has its role, non-electoral politics of people's movements has its role. At the most, we must try for further dialogue and further co-ordination amongst the two. You may or may not join AamAdmi Party. But movements should be able to contribute to that exercise of making a party's ideology clearer.Therefore, movements can help to usher in a new political force.

*Excerpts from Fr. Thomas Kocherry memorial public lecture delivered by Mehda Patkar at UC College Alwaye during the Biennial conference of Student Christian Movement of India (Transcribed by **Priyadarshini**).*

*Edited by **Aby Tharakan**, a media consultant based in Thimphu, Bhutan.*

Policy Shift

The Questions We Should Be Asking Frequently About the Land Acquisition Act

In the course of my work as part of a team set up to look into the socio-economic status of Adivasi communities, there were several things I learned about the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and the amendments to it. Here are some important questions about land and the Act that we should be asking.

USHA RAMANATHAN

In the course of my work as part of a team set up to look into the socio-economic status of Adivasi communities, there were several things I learned about the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and the amendments to it. Here are some important questions about land and the Act that we should be asking:

What is the State's relationship to land and its citizens?

This a key question – and one that remains unanswered. Is the State a landlord? Is it a trustee? Is it a super-landlord? Is it an owner? A super-owner? Is it above the law? We cannot defer these questions any longer.

It was in 2003 that the Supreme Court reintroduced the idea of citizens as 'subjects'. It said: "So long as the public purpose subsists the exercise of the power by the State to acquire the land of its subjects without regard to the wishes or willingness of the owner or person interested in the land cannot be questioned." But surely we have moved way beyond the idea of subject-hood. There are citizens in this country, and the State is bound by the law. This needs to be reasserted.

Is the present government's approach to the land and the environment any different from the previous Congress government?

Like the Manmohan Singh government before it, the Modi government sees forests, air, water and the protection of tribal interests instrumentally, in the context of its plans for the economy. Where it is a hurdle to the objectives that the government has set for itself, it uses its authority to sideline environmental and tribal interests. While the earlier government sidestepped the law if it came in the way of implementing its projects, the present government seems

to be looking at the ordinance route to derive temporary legality, in the confidence that it can find a way to propel the law through Parliament. In the process, the reason why laws were made to safeguard the environment, acknowledge and address situations of mass displacement, and to care for tribal interests, is getting lost.

Take, for example, the Cabinet Committee on Investment that the Manmohan Singh government set up in January 2013. Under the law, the government cannot take over land or make decisions about environmental and forest clearance without following the process that was set in place to ensure that the environment and local populations do not pay too heavy a price when development projects are being implemented. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, under which the rights of the forest dwelling and forest-dependent communities were "recognized", had to be implemented before any project could be happen in those areas. What the Committee did under the UPA was to decide that, for projects worth Rs 1,000 crore or more, there would be no need to worry about laws, whether they had to do with forest rights, or with pollution or with land acquisition. The Modi government now seeks to dilute these laws and to leave the final decision about whether a project should go ahead or not with the government.

Take another example: when it comes to forests, particularly Fifth Schedule Areas populated by people from the Scheduled Tribes, there are restrictions on land transfer and land alienation, and the State has been given the responsibility of safeguarding the interests of Adivasis and their relationship with the land. As this is seen as standing in the way of a number of projects that were a priority for the Manmohan Singh government, an exception was made to the Forest Rights' Act and Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the

When a government with a solid majority in one of the houses of Parliament feels that it has to take the ordinance route, there is a serious problem. And we have a senior minister like Arun Jaitley declaring that whatever happens while an ordinance is in force becomes irreversible, even if Parliament were not to pass the ordinance into law. This means he can push through the changes while the ordinance is in force, and worry later about whether the law gets passed or not.

Arun Jaitley

Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA),1996, bypassing public hearings and consent when it came to linear projects (roads, canals, highways, broadband, electricity etc). The present government is demonstrably impatient about the idea of consultation with affected communities, and with getting consent from tribal communities when planning on locating a project in their midst.

In May 2014, the Ministry of Environment and Forests was renamed the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change in May 2014, but there is nothing to indicate what this is supposed to mean. Especially when the Minister for Environment says he will not let environment be an impediment to development.

Has Parliament approved the new changes to the Land Acquisition Act?

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 is being amended through an ordinance. When a government with a solid majority in one of the houses of Parliament feels that it has to take the ordinance route, there is a serious problem. And we have a senior minister like Arun Jaitley declaring that whatever happens while an ordinance is in force becomes irreversible, even if Parliament were not to pass the ordinance into law. This means he can push through the changes while the ordinance is in force, and worry later about whether the law gets passed or not.

Some believe it's all right to have an ordinance, because once it's issued or promulgated, it has to be passed within six weeks once Parliament meets, or it ceases to be effective. It may then be re-promulgated. But, as the Supreme Court said in the 1986 case of DC Wadhwa, re-promulgation of ordinances would amount to a fraud against the Constitution.

The ordinances they have brought in now threatens to bring matters to a point where changes on the ground can be wrought through executive fiat.Ordinances are meant for emergencies, and there is no emergency now that can justify changing land acquisition laws without debate in public and in Parliament.

What changes does the current government want to make in its amendment-by-ordinance to the Land Acquisition Act, 2013?

Under the previous Land Acquisition Act of 1894, once land was acquired by the State and compensation was paid, the land belonged to the State. If the State did not go ahead with the project they were meant to and the land lay fallow, it would not be

returned to the person from whom it was acquired – it remained State property.

In two instances where people challenged this in court, the court ruled that the land could not be returned to the original owner, and ought not to be. For, the specious argument went, if it were auctioned in the open market, it would fetch the treasury more money. So, returning the land to the original owner would amount to cheating the treasury!

When the 2013 law was being negotiated, a clause was introduced which said that if the land acquired for a certain public purpose remained unutilized for a certain period, it would have to return the land to the original owners. Initially, when the 2013 Act was being debated, it was proposed that that period would be five years. By the time the law was passed, there were changes made to this clause – it was decided that if the land remained unutilized for a period of five years it may either be returned, or put into a land bank. The land would then continue to vest with the State through the creation of land banks. Even though it was, in a sense, acquired illegally because it was not used for the public purpose for which it was meant. The present ordinance says that if land acquired remains unutilized for five years or any other period that may be specified, whichever comes later, that clause will come into play. This unspecified period could mean anything – five years or even 25.

On one hand, it is said that there must be a shrinking of all procedures: no need for assessment of displacement or of families that will be affected by the project; no requirement of consent; no need to assess impact on food security. Then, the ordinance is brought in to say that the land may lie unutilized for even longer than five years. There's a fundamental contradiction here.

The amendment is expansive about the exceptions from social impact assessment and from the requirement of consent for projects in defence and defence production, rural infrastructure, affordable housing, industrial corridors and social infrastructure projects, including public-private partnerships, where ownership rests with the government.

The government believes social impact assessment is time consuming and disruptive. Under the 1894 Act, it was the Collector's role to listen to all objections and report to the State on whether the acquisition should go ahead. The 2013 Act introduced professionalized social impact assessments. That was an aspect that certainly needed more debate: for, contemporary history is replete with experience about what happens when private firms such as Pricewaterhouse Coopers or Arthur Andersen are left to audit and report on how projects are run, and of their implications. Under the amendment, it is not just social impact assessment that will be done away with, but the very idea that the affected people and the consequences of the project on their lives matter.

The 2013 law required consent from 80 percent of affected people before land was acquired. This will be rendered otiose. (The Ordinance replaces the term `private company' with `private entity'.So, now, it is not just private companies - which is itself a bone of serious contention - but all manner of private entities that can be assisted by the state to get land. And private entity, by definition in the 2014 Ordinance `includes `a proprietorship, partnership, company, corporation, non-profit organisation or any other entity under any law for the time being in force).

What is 'strategic importance'?

It is the Subramanian Committee Report that created this category – projects of 'strategic importance'. What 'strategic importance' means is anybody's guess. We know now that phrases such as 'national interest' and 'anti-national' have acquired meanings that attack whatever is inconvenient to the government. So, if for the project in Mahan forests in Madhya Pradesh, there was actually fraud practiced in procuring the consent of the villagers, that is not the problem; it is the fraud getting exposed and getting talked about that becomes the anti-national activity. This is a cynical use of power that pretends to derive its legitimacy from the law.

In the 2013 Act, after much debate, it was decided that multi-crop agricultural land was not to be diverted for purposes that are non-agricultural, in order to protect food security. Now, in the amendment-by-ordinance, they want to change this. Under the ordinance, multi-cropping agricultural land can now be acquired for certain projects in the interests of national security and defence.

Can't we have some sort of compromise?

The 2013 Act was spurred by the multiple sites of conflicts where people had been pushed to the wall when threatened with dispossession. One of the problems with the 2013 Act is that it tries to do something for everybody: for industry, for the farmer, for the State, for the Adivasi, for those concerned with food security. It also aimed to address the conflict and distrust caused by these projects. The extent of displacement without rehabilitation has been enormous. So, any law that aims to reduce distrust and conflict has to work to achieve that effect. Instead, what we see in the ordinance is the executive government giving short shrift to those affected by the project, going back to the idea that such people are merely obstacles to growth. Where in this is there room for compromise?

In tribal and scheduled areas, the fundamental thing is for the State to ensure that land is not transferred away from Adivasi communities. So, for a long time, the only entity that could take such land for a public purpose was the State. Now, the government is revealing a changed understanding of its role in relation to tribal communities and their land.

Was the 2013 Act ideal to start with?

The 2013 Act was brought in to deal with the pitched battles around the country contesting mass displacement. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, although a key example of this, was neither the first, nor will it be the last.

The 2013 law provides for compensation to people whose land is to be acquired. But to the extent that this was based on the understanding that those who resist displacement are always holding out for more money in compensation, it was deeply fallacious. There are people in multiple sites who do not want acquisition because they see the project as destroying their lives. This is a very different perspective from that which may have prevailed in Noida, for instance, when many were asking forenhanced compensation and a chance to get jobs in enterprises that may be set up on the land acquired. The introduction of consent was an important element that revealed a glimmer of understanding of what ails forced acquisition and mass displacement.

In tribal and scheduled areas, the fundamental thing is for the State to ensure that land is not transferred away from Adivasi communities. So, for a long time, the only entity that could take such land for a public purpose was the State. Now, the government is revealing a changed understanding of its role in relation to tribal communities and their land: if the law works for the government, then the law may stay. If the law does not support the government's objectives, there is the route of executive ordinances. And then there is brute force.

The 2013 Act is an improvement on the 1894 Act in terms of recognizing affected families beyond land owners and speaking the language of rehabilitation. But it legalizes the taking of land from people whose land ownership has been recognized under the FRA. Consent is required from 80 percent of people, which leaves 20 percent amenable to forcible acquisition. In the Tribal Committee Report we prepared, we've had to acknowledge that consent can be manufactured, sometimes by fraud, sometimes by coercion and duress, sometimes by misinformation. We also often hear it said that there can be no acquisition for a project until the FRA process of settling rights is completed, and this is often understood as being only about individual rights. The understanding of traditional and customary rights in the forest, community rights and access to resources – which staves off the vulnerability of tribal communities – is still very sketchy. The FRA was enacted in recognition of the historical injustice done to forest-dwelling and forest-dependent communities – they had had to lead shadowy existences as they were rendered illegal and cast as encroachers by forest laws until the Act was passed in 2006. To suggest that all that is required before they can have the land taken from them is that the rights should have been settled, and that this is about individual rights, is extremely cynical and overly pragmatic. Now, of course, the ordinance wants to dilute even that.

The 2013 law also does not require the company acquiring land for a project to rehabilitate those displaced – it only has to bear the cost for the State to rehabilitate them. Where they get this confidence that the State can perform this task is baffling – how will a State that has never delivered on this do it now? Under the 2013 law, if rehabilitation is not certified to be complete, there cannot be change of land use. The amendment ordinance leaves this intact. But there's an important question here – who is going to do the certification?

Moreover, according to the Vijay Kelkar Committee report on fiscal deficit, in 2012, excess land acquired by government agencies – for ports, or public sector corporations, for instance – can be sold to help deal with the fiscal deficit. Much of this land was originally purchased coercively under land acquisition proceedings. Dealing with fiscal deficit was never the purpose of the Land Acquisition Act, and it points to a worrying trend – that there's been over-acquisition of land which, the Kelkar committee suggests, may be auctioned off. In November 2014, the Comptroller and Auditor General submitted a report to Parliament which found that much of the land acquired for Special Economic Zones invoking the 'public purpose' clause was later sold or used for other purposes by corporations in the private sector such as Pepsico and Cadbury. According to its audit, "Out of 45,635.63 ha of land notified in the country for SEZ

Another continuing trend from the old government to the new has been the State becoming a contracting party with corporations. In the course of our work in Orissa and Chhattisgarh, for instance, we found MoUs being signed in large numbers. Chhattisgarh has 168 MoUs for various kinds of projects, and sometimes multiple MoUs are with the same company.

purposes, operations commenced in only 28,488.49 ha (62.42 percent) of land."

Is the relationship between the State and private companies too close for comfort?

Another continuing trend from the old government to the new has been the State becoming a contracting party with corporations. In the course of our work in Orissa and Chhattisgarh, for instance, we found MoUs being signed in large numbers. Chhattisgarh has 168 MoUs for various kinds of projects, and sometimes multiple MoUs are with the same company. This MoU culture talks very little of what the companies have to deliver. It talks a great deal about what the State has to deliver to the companies.

The State makes environmental laws, and then finds that the law is a bother. So it signs an MoU with a company promising to expedite environmental and forest clearance. Increasingly, we've found that in the MoUs, the State has also started promising to help in the maintenance of law and order in the project area, which is basically about taking sides in conflicts between local populations and corporations.

And, of course, we are hearing more and more voices speaking from the State about how the changes in law and policy will make industry happy, as though that is what should be the State's primary concern.

Can government officials be held accountable for misuse of the Land Acquisition Act?

Several legislations include a 'good faith' clause – words to the effect that anything done by any official acting under the law will be presumed to have been in good faith. If you want to challenge what they have done or prosecute someone under that law, you have to be able to establish that it was not done in good faith. The Land Acquisition Act has a bizarre and extreme provision: Section 197 of the CrPC, a provision that is severely contested for the impunity it produces, which says that no public servant may be prosecuted without the sanction for prosecution being given by the government. To my knowledge, this is the first time that Section 197 has been placed in an administrative law. It has so far been part of the criminal law apparatus and 'public order' laws, where the use of force is sanctioned by law. It is no secret that the State does not give sanction for prosecution often, for this provision is most often used to protect officials – who act at the behest of the State – from prosecution.

There is a certain logic that underlay the good faith clause. It was to meet the apprehension that administrators' work would get stalled if they were susceptible to being challenged for their acts, at least those done in good faith. Ironically, this is not dissimilar to the experience that activists have accumulated over the years, when case after case is foisted on them, dragging them into the courtroom for dissenting or resisting the actions of the State or of corporations.The sanction power has been challenged for some years now, especially where wrongdoers are seen as being shielded by it. The Prevention of Torture Bill (2010) made major strides when the Parliamentary Standing Committee endorsed the recommendation that the law be changed to say that requests for sanction must be dealt with by the State within a period of three months. It also recommended that rejections be accompanied by reasons, and the rejections should be subject to judicial challenge. So, while we have been battling to tame this provision and to do away with impunity, it is now being introduced in the Land Acquisition Act. Basically, this gives officials a free hand and promises them the protection of the State when they commit a wrong within the law!

Usha Ramanathan *works on the jurisprudence of law and poverty. She was a member of the High Level Committee set up in August 2013 to report on the socio-economic status of tribal communities.*

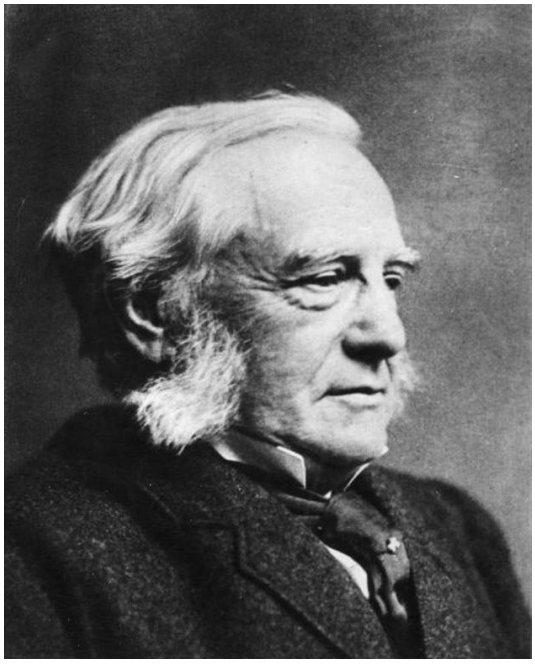
The reconversion yajna, *Ghar Wapsi*, as declared by the Sangh Pariwar, has heated up this winter quite a bit. Though claiming to save religion, the vibes that this project sends through religious and communal polarisation, aiming at a constant majority of Hindutva in the parliamentary elections, cannot be contained merely in the discussions on religious conversions. *Ghar Wapasi* is precisely an act of religious conversion planned and executed by Sangh Pariwar, which claims to oppose religious conversion and demands a ban on the same.

Ghar Wapsi: The Invitation of Fascism

TM Yesudasan

The benefit of this power receives from the fact that BJP rules in the centre is not negligible. At the first glance, we would notice that this is a programme targeting only a select few. It targets the Dalits and Adivasis who have embraced non-Hindu religions. If this is the intention, it should not be called a return to one's home. They did not have a home of that sort. Who does not know that Dalits and Adivasis were not Hindus? Again, if you are referring to those who left Hinduism and embraced other religions, first bring back those who claim a Brahmin tradition like the Syrian Christians before sympathising with the poorest of the poor. It is here that the upper casteist nature of *Ghar Wapsi* gets revealed. The upper castes in the minority religions maintain loyalty to the caste system. They would not have any objection in making *Bhagavad Gita* the national book. The acts of Dalits and Adivasis, who embraced non-Hindu religions impressed

Indologists like Max Muller have a great role to play in spreading the myth that Hinduism is not a missionary religion and that there is no religious conversion in Hinduism. How did Hinduism spread in this vast a geographical region without religious conversion? Religious conversions and fights between religions are there behind this. What do the broken Buddha idols that are found in many places in Kerala point to? A study amongst the Meitheis of Manipur reveals how, from the 18th century, Vaishanvite religion and ideas about caste spread amongst them; and how along with that their manuscripts and puranas were destroyed.


Max Muller

by the sympathy, were social choices that they made against the caste system. They understood religions like Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, which declare themselves egalitarian at least at the plane of discourse, as weapons for their fights against the caste system.The history of religious conversions of Dalits and Adivasis is one that reveals a strong anti-caste tradition. The agendas hidden behind *Ghar Wapsi* are to destroy this irrefutable progressive tradition and to prevent forever its possibilities and continuation. This should also be understood as the initial attempts to wipe out from the Indian soil, the option of religious conversion that was employed by Ambedkar against casteism.

There would only be a few who do not know that 'returning home' is not new thing. This is the programme that *Arya Samaj* and others have been conducting for more than a century in the name of *Shuddhi*. It is just that it attained fierceness now. The central and state governments are also justifying these religious conversions by including it in the gazette notification under the name 'reconversion'. The gimmick of reconversion is used to keep hidden the historical truth that Dalits were never Hindus. Most of us do accept the anti-historical usage of the term 'reconversion' without any criticism. Sangh Pariwar presents religious conversion as a violent programme planned and conducted exclusively by non-Hindu religions to extend the scope of their religions.

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Religious conversions and fights between religions are there behind this. What do the broken Buddha idols that are found in many places in Kerala point to? A study amongst *the Meitheis* of Manipur reveals how, from the 18th century, Vaishanvite religion and ideas about caste spread amongst them; and how along with that their manuscripts and puranas were destroyed.

Ambedkar interpreted the dynamics of ancient Indian history as the conflict between Brahmin religion and the Sramana tradition of Buddhism. Moreover, he associated the Dalits with the Sramana tradition that was destroyed.

Instead of a modern welfare state based strongly on secularism, social justice and human rights, Sangh Pariwar dreams of a religious Hindu state. In a fascist religious state, minority religions can only continue as secondary, in the mercy of the majority religion. But, Sangh Pariwar is disturbed by the thought that if the flow of the depressed castes into other religions is allowed to continue, their status as the majority might get overturned in the recent future. The bill to prevent religious conversion, introduced in the parliament by O.P. Thyagi in 1978, reveals this annoyance of the Sangh Pariwar.

We also have in our memory the widespread campaign organised by Vishwa Hindu Parishad against religious conversion in 1981, when hundreds of Dalits accepted Islam in Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu. In

A group of Muslim families seen doing a ritual at a ceremony organized by a Hindu organization to "convert" to Hinduism in Agra- Times of India

the 1980s, a slogan appeared on the walls of Odisha: *"Exterminate the foreign missionary, Save the land."* In January 1999, the foreign missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were burned to death in Manoharpur, Odisha. In September, the same year, a Catholic priest named Arul Das was killed in the neighbouring village. Pamphlets praising Dara Singh, the main accused in the murder of Staines, were sold like hot cakes.

After the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, there was countrywide violence against the Muslims. In 1998 and 1999, the Adivasis who accepted Christianity became victims of violent attacks in the Dangs, Gujarat. Instead of condemning the attacks, Prime Minister Vajpayee called for a debate on religious conversions. It is as if proving the notion that fear can buy passive agreement from people that Narendra Modi government came back to power with a huge majority in the assembly elections after the Gujarat massacres in February-March 2001.

The Gujarat formula found success in the last Loksabha elections as well. But the fact remains that BJP got only one-third of the votes. Sangh Pariwar is troubled by the fact that no large scale communal polarisation has happened as expected, in spite of conducting so many riots. The increased flow of Dalits into Buddhism is also irritating the Hindutva forces. It is the pressure from the fear of numbers that encourage them to spread radical Hindutva programmes like *Ghar Wapsi.* It is also a part of the attempt to have attacks on the minority religions by campaigning that all the issues of Hinduism are due the presence of Islam and Christianity.

Sangh Pariwar gives the explanation that Ghar Wapasi only aims at bringing back those who submitted to religious conversions, in order to regain the unity and security of Hinduism and the land that are put to danger by religious conversions. Ghar Wapasi is a programme that leads the Dalit to a place where s/he cannot find a home in any manner.

Sangh Pariwar gives the explanation that *Ghar Wapsi* only aims at bringing back those who submitted to religious conversions, in order to regain the unity and security of Hinduism and the land that are put to danger by religious conversions. *Ghar Wapsi* is a programme that leads the Dalit to a place where s/he cannot find a home in any manner.

This radical right wing stand, 'returning home', tactically covers up the fear and violence that the upper caste Hinduism unleash on the Dalits and Adivasis. These kind of programmes should be understood as attempts to convert into suicide squads the Dalit-Adivasi groups, who form a considerable number in the population but are yet to become an organised class based on self-representation; as Sangh Pariwar has realised that upper caste Hindus alone will not suffice to weaken other religions, when it comes to the number of votes.

Prof.TM Yesudasan *is an influential teacher of literature and a leading thinker in the field of dalit culture and politics. At present he is the General Editor of Malayalam Research Journal, published from Kottayam, Kerala.*

Translated by ***Dr. Reju George****, faculty at Christ University, Bangalore*

Ninan Koshy

A Man For Such a Time as This

SCMI National Youth Consultation in1969

Jesudas M. Athyal

He taught in four colleges, then went on to be the General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) for five years and, subsequently, worked as an ecumenical diplomat for seventeen years, travelling to most countries in the world. Among his friends were Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Visser 't Hooft, the architect of the modern ecumenical movement and E. M. S. Nampoodiripad, the veteran Communist leader. He had enough laurels to rest on, and retire to a life of peace and comfort. But his 'retired life' turned out to be as full as ever. He wrote over half a dozen books and scores of articles, and spoke in hundreds of meetings. He ran in a tumultuous election to the Indian Parliament. During the last days of his life, he travelled to Chennai to deliver the Keynote Address at a conference. Even while being rushed to the hospital, he remembered that he was scheduled to speak at a book release program in Thiruvananthapuram that evening, along with Mr. V. S. Achuthanandan, the leader of Kerala's Opposition Front. He was devising new books, taking up speaking assignments and supporting study projects. He pushed himself till the very end. He lived by the dictum: "One must die in harness".

Ninan Koshy was the senior most ecumenical leader in India when he passed away on March 4, 2015. And, without doubt, he was one of the most distinguished General Secretaries of the SCMI. Coming to Bangalore to assume the leadership of the SCMI was not an easy choice for him. In the 1960s he had a successful and highly satisfying career as the Vice Principal and Head of the Department of English at the Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara and as a member of the Kerala University Senate. M.M. Thomas commented that his job was "too secure" and suggested that he move to Bangalore to take up the leadership of the SCMI. Ninan took up the challenge, setting aside security and comfort. There is little doubt that the SCM launched Ninan on to the worldwide ecumenical path. While delivering the Keynote Address at the SCMI Biennial in 2014 he acknowledged that the movement"prepared me to take up other tasks in the ecumenical movement".

Ninan Koshy was a multifaceted person and let us hope that researchers in future will study indepth his contributions in the church, ecumenical movement and society. This short article, however, will briefly visit only three aspects of his life: the social thinker, the ecumenist and the global citizen.

The Social Thinker

Ninan Koshy often acknowledged the influence M.M. Thomas had on his life. About meeting Thomas for the first time at the Christian Institute in Alappuzha in the 1950s, he noted: "M.M. Thomas became my mentor and had a great influence on me from that time. It is literally true to say that he guided me through my ecumenical career, fostered a theological interest in me and enabled me to explore the dimensions of faith, especially the political"*("Some Personal Notes",p.1.Unpublished)*.With Thomas's encouragement, Ninan wrote his first book in Malayalam on 'Church and State', for the Theological Literature Committee. He subsequently undertook a sociological and theological study of the caste system that prevailed in the churches in Kerala - the first attempt in India to move beyond personal impressions to field research, in studying caste and Christianity. The study, published in 1968 with the title, *"Caste in the Kerala*

Dr. MM Thomas

Bishop Paulose Mar Paulose

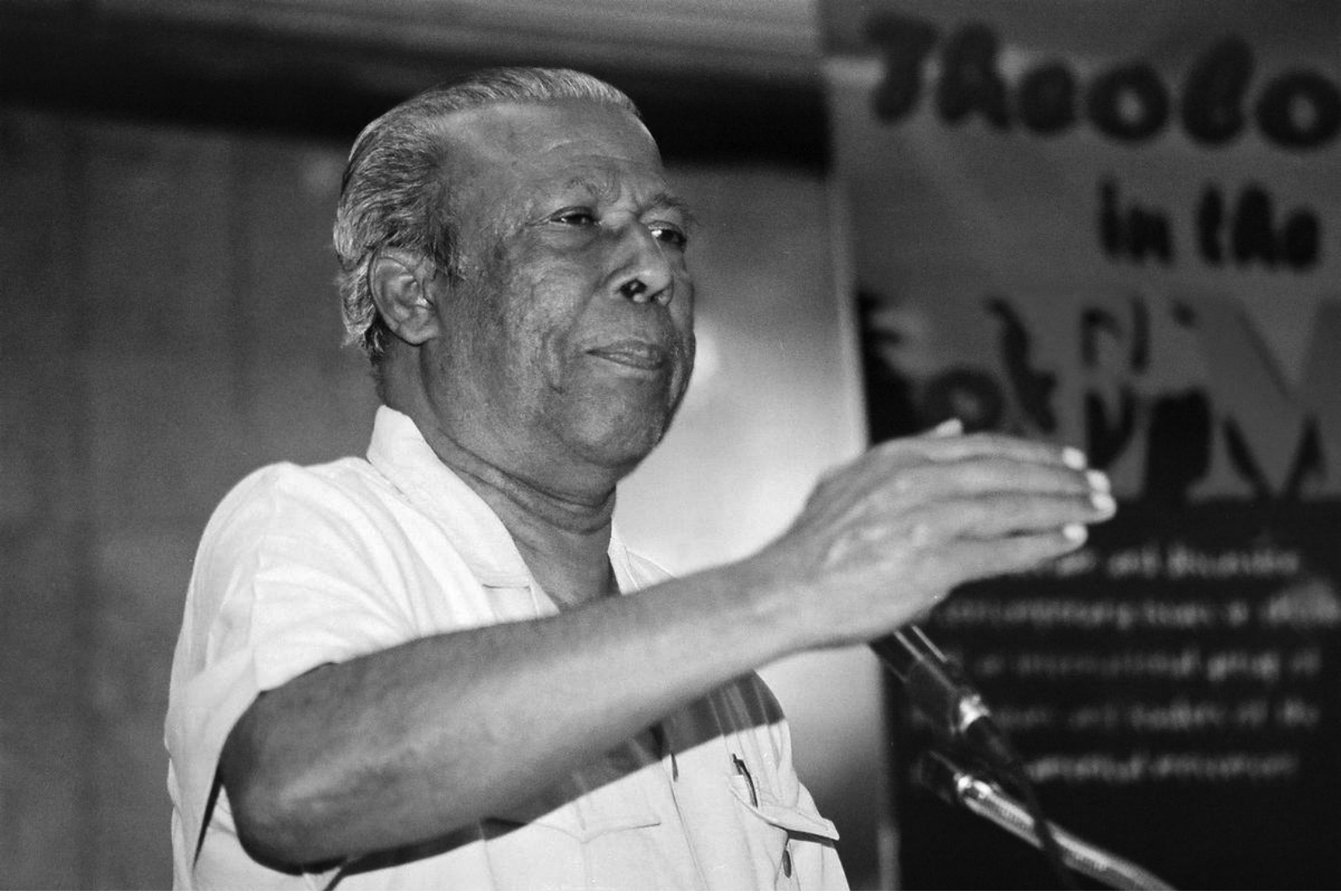
With M.M. Thomas and Bishop Poulose Mar Poulose, he participated in Christian-Marxist dialoguesin Kerala, along with the leaders of the Communist parties. Even while maintaining a distinctly faith-oriented position, Ninan associated with the Communists in areas of common interest and especially in the struggles for justice, the promotion of secularism and on issues of globalization. Philip Wickeri, a scholar on Chinese religion and society, noted that there were not many people in the Ecumenical Movement who knewas well as Ninan did, how to speak with Communists on their own terms.

Churches", came as a bombshell shattering the complacency and optimism of the Indian church. Forty seven years later, in February 2015, a revised edition of the book along with a postscript on the contemporary situation was released at the conference Ninan attended a few days before passing away.

In his personal notes, he acknowledges that as a student, he was drawn to politics and particularly, to the leftist movement. Even as he moved on to be an ecumenical leader and an expert in international relations, his social analysis continued to be shaped by a leftist perspective. With M.M. Thomas and Bishop Poulose Mar Poulose, he participated in Christian-Marxist dialogues in Kerala, along with the leaders of the Communist parties. Even while maintaining a distinctly faith-oriented position, Ninan associated with the Communists in areas of common interest and especially in the struggles for justice, the promotion of secularism and on issues of globalization. Philip Wickeri, a scholar on Chinese religion and society, noted that there were not many people in the Ecumenical Movement who knew as well as Ninan did, how to speak with Communists on their own terms.

Upon his return to India after working with the WCC, Ninan renewed his ties with the leftist political process in the country. He returned at a time when the Hindu nationalist politics was assuming center stage role in various parts of India. He plunged into the leftist and secular movement that countered the forces of fundamentalism and he upheld the democratic and secular space. He was active in this work till the very end. Speaking in Chennai on February 23, 2015, he asked some pertinent questions on *Ghar wapsi* – the attempts by the Hindutva forces to re-convert the minority religious groups. *"Ghar wapsi"*, he affirmed, "is not a simple act of conversion or reconversion but has a political ideological intent behind it. The assumptions and claims of *'ghar wapsi'* are wrong and questionable. Was Hinduism the house of these victims of *'ghar wapsi'* at any time? What is the state of the house they are returning to? Where is their place in the house?" *("Diaconal Church in the Radically Changing India", p. 4).* The reference here was to the caste-based and other discrimination that motivated many subaltern communities to leave Hinduism in the past, a situation that remains largely unchanged today.

Along with countering the threats to the secular fabric of India, Ninan also recognized the dangers posed to the principle of economic justice. In response to the policies of globalization and liberalization pursued by the Manmohan Singh government, he noted: "Globalization is a development model which emphasizes only growth. Conceptually justice has no place in globalization. Justice has no place in globalization's scheme of things" *("Ecumenism: Perspectives from the Margins", p. 3).* The BJP government that succeeded Singh has pursued, more or less, the economic path of the previous rulers. As Narendra Modi and the various state governments followed policies that endangered the environment and the lives of the marginalized communities, Ninan affirmed that there cannot be genuine growth and development without economic justice. While delivering the Keynote Address at the SCMI Biennial in 2014, he noted: "…the country's main problem lies in the lack of attention to the essential needs of the people, especially of the poor. There have been major failures both to foster growth and to make good of the public resources generated by economic growth to enhance people's living conditions. They point out that there is also a continued inadequacy of social services such as safe water, electricity, drainage, transport and sanitation. In the long run, the feasibility of high economic growth is threatened by the underdevelopment of social and physical infrastructures and the neglect of human capabilities."*("Democracy, Politics, Nationalism – A Christian Response". pp. 5-6).*



Ninan Koshy

The Ecumenical Visionary

Ninan Koshy's leadership to the SCMI was in tune with the pioneering leadership of the lay people to the ecumenical movement till recent decades. In the words of Hans-Ruedi Weber, the history of the ecumenical movement as a whole is the story of the lay people's commitment to be Christian in the world *("On Being Christian in the World: Reflections on the Ecumenical Discussion about the Laity")*. This was especially true in the case of India. Virtually every ecumenical institution founded in the country in the early twentieth century – the National Christian Council (later the National Council of Churches), the National Missionary Society, SCMI, YMCA, YWCA and also, many of the missionary organizations that ignited the Christian mass movements in India – were lay initiatives. There were also individuals. From Sarah Chacko and Augustine Ralla Ram to Rajah D. Paul, M.M. Thomas and G.R. Karat, India provided during the twentieth century a vibrant leadership to the ecumenical movement. Ninan Koshy was, perhaps, the last in this distinguished line of lay leaders.

He brought in a distinctly Indian and Asian perspective to the ecumenical movement. As he later noted, he joined the SCM at the time of an ideological crisis in the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). The Asian SCMs, however, pointed out that the University situation in Asia was different from that of the USA and Europe *(Some Personal Notes, p. 3).* Through his work with the

His work with regard to China, South Africa and Korea is being particularly remembered by the ecumenical community. While the churches in China had, for long decades, been outside the membership of the WCC, the quiet and long-drawn out negotiations of Ninan and his colleagues Erich Weingartner and Victor Hsu led to the re-entry of the churches in China to the WCC. This was based on the principle that member churches should not be listed under countries but under regions. Accordingly, both the China Christian Council and the National Council of Churches in Taiwan became members of the WCC. Ninan also served as a member of the U.N. team of observers during the elections in South Africa, and as an observer during the peace negotiations between North and South Korea.

SCMI and WSCF he, thus, became a participant in the national movements of Asia. He continued to play this role in his work with the World Council of Churches. In his post-WCC days, he was asked to lead the writing and editing of the history of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia. The two volume publication that he produced under the title, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia* *(Published by the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and the Christian Conference of Asia in 2004)* is a scholarly work based on considerable research, narration and interpretation of the evolution and development of one of the most significant movements of the twentieth century in Asia. In this work, Ninan succeeded in weaving together the varied histories of the CCA, YMCA and WSCF, highlighting their common themes and concerns. Beginning with a brilliant presentation of theological and mission concerns, he explored the evolution, development and emerging trends of the wide range of concerns that have stimulated these ecumenical institutions and their mission in Asia. Inherent in his work was a genuine Asian perspective, which provides Asian terms and interpretation to common themes in worldwide ecumenical debates. The significant role played by the Asian ecumenical consciousness for more than nine decades in broadening and widening the ecumenical vision was highlighted in these volumes.

Olav Fykse Tveit

The statement issued upon Ninan's death by the WCC General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit noted that the series of international ecumenical consultations that he organized in Geneva broke new grounds in identifying militarization as an underlying cause of war and conflict and that the "definition of militarism developed there was subsequently applied by the United Nations in its Commission on Human Rights"

Ninan Koshy, however, refused to be caught up in an ecumenical movement that was indifferent to the liberation of the marginalized sections of the society. At every point, he affirmed that the "poor of the land" should be the object and subject of all our reflection and action. Delivering the Keynote Address at the National Theological Students Conference in Bangalore in 2014 he noted that ecumenism from the perspective of the marginalized demands the ecumenical movement to be prophetic. "Prophetic ecumenism thus contains both diagnosis and prognosis, both powerful words to unmask situations of injustice and powerful words to announce what is possible. Ecumenism should bear witness to this word, as a sign of resistance and at the same time as anticipation of what is hoped. The ecumenical movement can never be silent; bold words are an integral part of ecumenism. The attempt to arrive at consensus can turn to be an abdication of the prophetic duty" *("Ecumenism: Perspectives from the Margins", p. 9).*

The Global citizen… with local roots

Ninan Koshy's expertise in international affairs went back to his student days when he served as a columnist on international matters for several Malayalam dailies. He was, in fact, the first columnist to write in Malayalam, regular features on international affairs. He has later acknowledged that this was his introduction to the field of international affairs. "Writing a weekly column on international affairs relying on the very few resources available at that time was challenging. That was how I became a 'specialist' on international affairs. With little background of history or politics in my education, I did

Philip Wickeri

Erich Weingartner

His work with regard to China, South Africa and Korea is being particularly remembered by the ecumenical community. While the churches in China had, for long decades, been outside the membership of the WCC, the quiet and long-drawn out negotiations of Ninan and his colleagues Erich Weingartner and Victor Hsu led to the re-entry of the churches in China to the WCC. This was based on the principle that member churches should not be listed under countries but under regions.

a lot of reading on these during that time"*(Some Personal Notes, p. 2).*

Ninan Koshy's main contribution within the Churches' Commission on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches was in the analyses he had to carry out of critical international situations, in developing theological and conceptual clarity in the area of international affairs, and exploring possibilities for what may be called 'ecumenical diplomacy'. Almost from the time he joined the staff of CCIA and certainly from 1979 onwards, he drafted the public statements of the WCC on international affairs. This meant that he was actively involved in policy making on public issues.

His work with regard to China, South Africa and Korea is being particularly remembered by the ecumenical community. While the churches in China had, for long decades, been outside the membership of the WCC, the quiet and long-drawn out negotiations of Ninan and his colleagues Erich Weingartner and Victor Hsu led to the re-entry of the churches in China to the WCC. This was based on the principle that member churches should not be listed under countries but under regions. Accordingly, both the China Christian Council and the National Council of Churches in Taiwan became members of the WCC. Ninan also served as a member of the U.N. team of observers during the elections in South Africa, and as an observer during the peace negotiations between North and South Korea.

He was considered as a specialist in the areas of nuclear disarmament and militarization. The statement issued upon Ninan's death by the WCC General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit noted that the series of international ecumenical consultations that he organized in Geneva broke new grounds in identifying militarization as an underlying cause of war and conflict and that the "definition of militarism developed there was subsequently applied by the United Nations in its Commission on Human Rights" *(WCC Obituary statement, dated March 6, 2015).* It needs to be reiterated, however, that during all global gatherings, not for a moment did Ninan Koshy forget that the ultimate purpose of ecumenism should be human liberation - a pertinent message at a time when nuclear power and military supremacy were considered as symbols of status by the nations. While participatingin international discussions on disarmament and demilitarization, Koshy reminded the participants that the centre of all our discussions should be the human life that is affected by violence, not military might.

As Preman Niles summed up: "Ninan's main contribution within the CCIA's set up was in the analyses he had to carry out of critical international situations, in developing theological and conceptual clarity in the area of international affairs, and exploring possibilities for what may be called 'ecumenical diplomacy' *("Ninan Koshy: An Ecumenical Voice in the World of Nations."(article yet to be published)*

Ninan Koshy rewrote the cliché: "think globally, act locally". He thought and acted in both contexts. He had travelled all over the world, and could discuss, with a certain authority, the social and political situation of most places. International relations, after all, was his specialty. And yet, he was firmly rooted in India and particularly, in Kerala. When he spoke, wrote and interacted with the confidence of a man who had never left Kerala, he was not being ethnic but merely genuine. For, underlying this person, whether he was in Geneva, Beijing or Thiruvananthapuram was the deep conviction that all ecumenism, all politics and academic work should lead to human liberation. Liberation everywhere.

The condolence message of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines summed up the life, message and challenge of Ninan Koshy: "He passes on to us a tradition both comforting and disturbing. Comforting because he did his best and contributed significantly to the upholding of the spirit of ecumenism. Disturbing because the issues of poverty, war, injustice, domination, colonialism, marginalization, human rights violations and Christian disunity still linger in our day. He fought against these with a passion he now passes on to us."

Dr. Jesudas M. Athyal *is a fellow at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission of the Boston University School of Theology. He was associate professor of social analysis and philosophy at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai, India.*

Paris, Peshawar And Boko Haram

Ram Puniyani

Religion, Politics And Violence

Massacre of hundreds of children in Peshawar by Pakistani Taliban, the atrocities: murders-kidnappings by Boko Haram, an Islamist group and the attack on Paris cartoon magazine Charlie Hadbo killing 16, have occurred in a short span of few months. The popular perception of relationship between violence and Islam got a further boost. The phrase 'Islamic Terrorism', which was created by US media in the aftermath of 9/11, got a further shot in the arms. It got a booster dose of unprecedented level.

The debates regarding freedom of expression, sharia laws, education for girls continued to be in the fore and columns after column either dissociating Islam from these mindless acts or boosting the perception of Muslims being in the business of merciless killing of their own kith and other with gay abandon; dominated the visual and print media *(January 2015).*

These acts of terror kill the innocent people and Koran- *chapter V verse 32*- goes on to say that even if you kill a single innocent person, that's like killing the whole humanity with an addition that if you save a single innocent person that's like saving the whole humanity. Still the impression continues that currently most of the dreaded acts of terror are either done by Muslims belonging to this or that group or faction. Not too long ago we did witness acts of terror from the like of Andres Behring Brevik (Norway); the people like Ashin Wirathu (Buddhist Myanmar) were in the news for related actions. Swami Aseemanand is in jail and had confessed to the acts of terrorist violence not too long ago. Does one want to underplay the association of Islam-Muslims and acts of terror? Is one wanting to be in denial mode as for as violence by some Muslims is concerned? The teachings of *Koran* notwithstanding; there are some Muslims who take to the senseless killings in the most insane and cruel manner; is definitely true. The question is; are such acts due to Islam or Muslims as such? How does one understand the association of label of religion with acts of violence and terror?

At the cost of broad generalizations one can say that most of the prophets of religions focused on some issue of injustice in the society and called for peace, non-violence in their own historical context. The society was either based on pastoral or agricultural mode of production and tribal society- kingdoms were the main pattern of organization of society. The religions, which began as the moral edicts had added social and communitarian functions as well. Clergy became a major component of religions. The spread of the message of prophets also led to the in-

stitutionalization of religions, which added one more dimension to the broad umbrella provided by religion as a social phenomenon. These institutions built around religions became a very significant part of religions. Those controlling levers of power gradually allied with the religions' institutions; and these institutions came to be patronized by the rulers. In turn the institutionalized religions legitimized the power of the king, landlord. King was presented as the son of God in different ways.

The alliance of King-Clergy was best seen in the alliance King-Pope. In other religions' contexts it became Nawab-Shahi Imam, Raja-Rajguru for example. Currently in Pakistan and Myanmar; mostly; the institutions of religions and dominating army are hands in gloves times and over again. In our Maharashtra a popular Marathi phrase sums it very well Shetji-Bhatji (Landlord-Priest). With religions being institutionalized the collaboration between kings and clergy became the foundation of social system where the agricultural producers-craftsmen and other laboring masses submitted to the system created by the power of the king and ideology of the clergy. The words of Prophets went in to the background. The organization of clergy was varying, from the most organized in Christianity to the decentralized one in Hinduism, to Islam where there is no theological justification of clergy; nevertheless it is very much there.

Here comes the entry of power in the realm of religion. Kingdoms, many a times took the cover of religion for their goals of power. The kings expanded or wanted to expand their kingdoms and put this expansion project to annex other territories in the garb of Crusade, Jihad or Dharmyudh depending on the religion of the king.

The real use of religion's identity, label, can be seen during colonial period. In most South Asian countries,

Prayers offered for victims of Peshawar attack - UNI

Protestors demonstrate in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, to bring attention to the more than 200 girls abducted in Nigeria - EPA

Demonstrations to protest at Charlie Hebdo killings - Reuters

particularly in India, we see that with the social, economic changes accompanying the introduction of transport, communication, industries and modern education during colonial period, there was a rise of new classes in the form of businessmen industrialists, workers and educated classes in particular. They formed secular organizations, with secular democratic Indian nationalism as the goal, like Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (Bhagat Singh), Independent Labor Party, Scheduled Castes Federation (B.R.Ambedkar) and the overarching Indian Nationalist Congress (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Mahatma Gandhi). In contrast to these rising classes the declining classes of Landlords and Kings pledged their loyalty to British and went on to form Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha and later RSS with the agenda of Hindu nation. In the Religious nationalist organizations initially only kings-landlords were there later some educated and upper caste elite and still later sections of middle class also joined in. Here the communitarian identity of religion was exploited by declining classes to protect their social-political interests. When they said 'my religion in danger' they meant my political interests are in danger. They also indulged in 'Hate other' propaganda, leading to communal violence and later to the partition of the country. Here we see religion being used as a cover, the religious nationalism to hide their feudal values of caste and gender hierarchy. Similarly the cover of Buddhism has been used by political tendencies in Srilanka and Myanmar.

With the coming in of Imperialism, the rise of the US as the global super power dominated the global scene. Two superpowers USSR and USA were in the game of 'Cold War'. US later planned and used Islam to counter Socialist block. It meticulously used a version of Islam for indoctrination the minds of youth. These youth were used to fight against the Soviet Russia and later the same indoctrinated youth came up and are tormenting the parts of the World. This phase of 'religion as a cover of political goals' begins with the formation of Israel in the aftermath of Second World War, the eviction of 14 lakh Palestinians away from their home and hearth. In due course to protect its oil interests the US-Britain nexus overthrew the democratically elected Mossadegh Government in Iran. This 'chain of events' did lead to coming to power of Ayatollah Khomeini. At this point US media coined the word 'Islam the new threat'. They meant that Socialism as the threat is in decline and Islam is coming up as the new threat to the free World. In its design to use all methods to crush the socialist block, US encouraged the Madarassas in Pakistan, where the Wahabbi version of Islam was introduced as a part of the training module designed in Washington. This version of Islam had already been the ally of the Saud family, in whose name Saudi Arabia stands. The Saud family came to use this version of Islam, Wahabbism to control the oil wealth of the region. US allied with Saud dynasty and also promoted Wahabbi version in the Madrassas in Pakistan. This version of Islam saw in every person disagreeing with their interpretation of Islam, as Kafir and killing the kafirs as Jihad. Jihad being the path to Jannat after death, jannat waiting with the rich reward of 72 virgins! This heady mix of 'brain washing' did lead to Mujahedeen being transformed to Taliban-Al Qaeda and later giving rise to ISIS, the major menace in today's world. Tendencies like Boko Haram draw their inspiration and support from the similar understanding of Islam. Time and again a large section of leaders of Muslims, many of the maulanas have issued the fatwa's that terrorism is against the tenets of Islam, but what sticks in social awareness is the picture of Taliban or ISIS or Al Qaeda or Boko haram as the face of Muslims and Islam. No wonder one of the greatest philosophers of all the times Karl Marx, remarked very aptly that' Ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class', that's the power of media at the service of the US, at the service of Corporate houses. Today the Islamophobia rules the streets and in some form or the other the religion which came to give the message of peace is perceived as the ultimate in prompting and indulging in violence.

Do we need to factor in the political forces, Kings of the past, the colonial masters of yesteryears and the 'oil hungry' global superpowers, behind promoting, abusing religions' identity to understand the dastardly acts tormenting the humanity? The phrases joining any religion and terrorism are the biggest insult to the morality of religions to be sure!

Do we need to factor in the political forces, Kings of the past, the colonial masters of yesteryears and the 'oil hungry' global superpowers, behind promoting, abusing religions' identity to understand the dastardly acts tormenting the humanity? The phrases joining any religion and terrorism are the biggest insult to the morality of religions to be sure!

Ram Puniyani *was a professor in biomedical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, and took voluntary retirement in December 2004 to work full time for communal harmony in India. He is involved with human rights activities from last two decades.He is associated with various secular and democratic initiatives like All India Secular Forum, Center for Study of Society and Secularism and ANHAD. Response only to ram.puniyani@gmail.com*

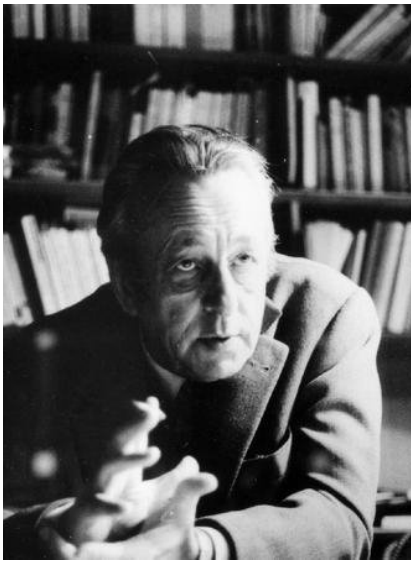
For the last few decades, the country has witnessed education sector being aggressively put under severe constraints by political actors. It is not altogether a new phenomenon that with periodical changes in governance contents of text books also undergoes occasional change. That happens because like anywhere in the world, Indian class rooms are also managed to suit the interests of the state. But what we see more recently is that an entire educational sector is being made subservient to a set of extremely narrow political paradigms as dictated by the ruling elites.

Nationalisation *of* Education

George Alex

While the neoliberal economic reforms on the one side have stricken deep roots on education sector as well, class rooms get revamped to foster communal and sectarian social imaginations, on the other. These combined, put enormous pressure on our education system, as though to force change the conventional set up, lock stock and barrel. Considering also the widening socio-economic disparities all around, the field of education is seen hopelessly gripped reactionary ideologies with characteristically political, social, religious or casteist components.

No doubt, education serves an important political function of reproducing the structures of dominance in society. Louis Althusser has put it that education is a form of ideological training offered by the state to all members of a society in order to ensure latter's collaboration in reproducing the existing social order. Following this postulation, Althusser places education as one of the ideological state apparatuses. However, it is through the same education that class rooms are enabled to oppose the dominant ideologies and effectively displace them with alternative ideologies.



Louis Althusser

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One can see that the education system which was primarily installed by the western colonialists to serve to legitimise imperial designs, later paved the way for shaking the foundation of colonial rule in India. This may be the result of emerging new consciousness about the world, which in turn is the outcome of contradictions between what was taught there in text books on the one hand and what the social reality, on the other, was.

Class rooms are places where the consciousness about the world takes shape. Most fascist states have known this to organize class rooms accordingly to suit their interests .When Benito Mussolini in the fascist Italy started out to reform education, he had Giovanni Gentile as his education minister. The latter had famously proclaimed: 'We need an education that empowers the Italian Nationality'. In a strikingly resonating manner, present incumbents of Human Resources Ministry in India also have presented a document which underscores the urgent need of total "Bharat-isation "of education! The very objective of such reforms is defined as discovering the glorious heritage of Bharat. The reason of failure of present educational system of India, according to them, is 'extreme westernization'. This criticism of existing education by present day reformists is similar in most aspects to that leveled by Gentile against education in the Italy of 1921.

The purpose of this article is to explore how far Narendra Modi's team in their pursuit of educational reforms has absorbed Gentile's philosophy and theories of education.

Mussolini and the Education Sector

Mussolini started substantial reforms in education in 1923. Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), a philosopher and author of 'Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals', prepared the blue print for educational reforms in Italy. Writing a foreword to Gentile's proposals in educational reforms, Benedetto Croce acclaimed it as the ultimate expression of pragmatism against all hues of romanticism. Gentile was already one among the most ardent critiques of prevalent educational system. Through his proposals for reforms, he virtually got done away with the conventional distinction between 'education' and 'instruction'. The pivotal point of fascist agenda of educational reforms was indeed, the idea of 'Nationalisation of Knowledge'. According to Gentile, nationality is not so much about the reality than the passion with which we perceive it. He would rather reject all links of objectivity and then construe nationality in a purely whimsical way. While attempting education reform, Gentile's framework was fundamentally linked to defining nationality in a particular fashion. Nationality does not consist in content which may of course be varying; it is about form that a certain content of human consciousness assumes, when it is felt to constitute a nation's character. Gentile further says that nationality is constituted by elements having spiritual basis, rather than material. 'Nationality is not something already built up, but it is a goal or a probability', Gentile, explains further, citing Masini, the Italian nationalist's views. Masini was not talking about the real people around him but about the future people that the Italian men and women were bound to create. That, indeed, is a holy idea comprising the notion of fatherland to be conquered and ruled by such people. (See, Govanni Gentile, The Reform of Education,1921).

Fascists consider nation and country as different realities. Gentile, the philosopher of fascism postulated that even when a country is founded as sovereign entity, nationality will still have to be formed. The idea that existence of nation precedes formation of any country is rejected by Gentile. Creation of nationality is placed rather as a goal to be fulfilled in the course of a country/state being built or run in a proper manner. Nationality is the accomplished self of entire people of a country bound together. Hence, people of a strong nationality should consider it their duty to identify themselves with the nation. The making of a nation would inevitably demand sacrifices and martyrdom of individuals. The flag of nationality always flutters as martyrs offer their lives defending it. How people are mandated to express themselves as they look toward to the future is the basis of fascist ideology. While they espouse the ideology of nation, even the thoughts on science must be subordinated to and controlled by the nationality in question. No

science must be allowed to be possible to exist beyond the precincts of nationality. Knowledge cannot exist differently and independently of human personality .The concrete form of one's personality is his or her nationality. Hence, no teacher should be allowed to perceive knowledge independent of his personality. Educational or science & technology institutions must not be allowed to impart any knowledge that may be incompatible with nationality. These were the founding principles on which Gentile built up the idea of national education, which in turn, was motivated by the spiritual essence of father land. One can see that the idea of nationalising Indian education is also shaped on similar foundations.

Education for Character Formation

Fascism postulates that human personality has two mutually contradicting aspects. One is 'concrete personality', and the other is 'particular personality'. The latter is closely stuck to one's self consciousness and characterized by one's ability to see the self as distinct from other humans. But, particular personality finds expression through one's self consciousness and will. One acquires his self consciousness socially; self consciousness is primarily based on things such as tradition, language, religious beliefs etc .Therefore, one's personality is a thing socially granted .Man's desires though have no limits, such desires can exist only by being subjected to the control of reigning forces. Hence, the ultimate seat available for fulfillment of desires is the state itself. Outside the state, there is no place for particular personality of individuals. Similarly, fascism also proclaims that it is simply not possible for people to exist independently and outside the limits of the nation concerned. 'Concrete personality', for all practical purposes means simply the one that merges with the national identity. Fascism does not recognize any right for 'particular personality' to exist at all. Education is a realm of spiritual activity. Pedagogy is sort of training given in order to nourish human personality. The teacher occupies a very important position here. He/She is the embodiment of universal role model, whose duty is to pour elements of science, virtuous rituals and belief systems into the brains and minds of particular personalities. It is so, because the very objective of education is to mould efficient and self confident personalities. According to Gentile , while education basically aims to transform the abstract into concrete, that objective is best accomplished through metamorphosing particular personalities into concrete personalities .The teacher should aim for developing the personalities of their students to the utmost levels. The process of education should involve causing destruction of the duality between teacher and student. Culture being the link that equips the teacher to lead the student to accomplishing concrete personality, it is considered as the third factor that decisively contributes in the educational process.

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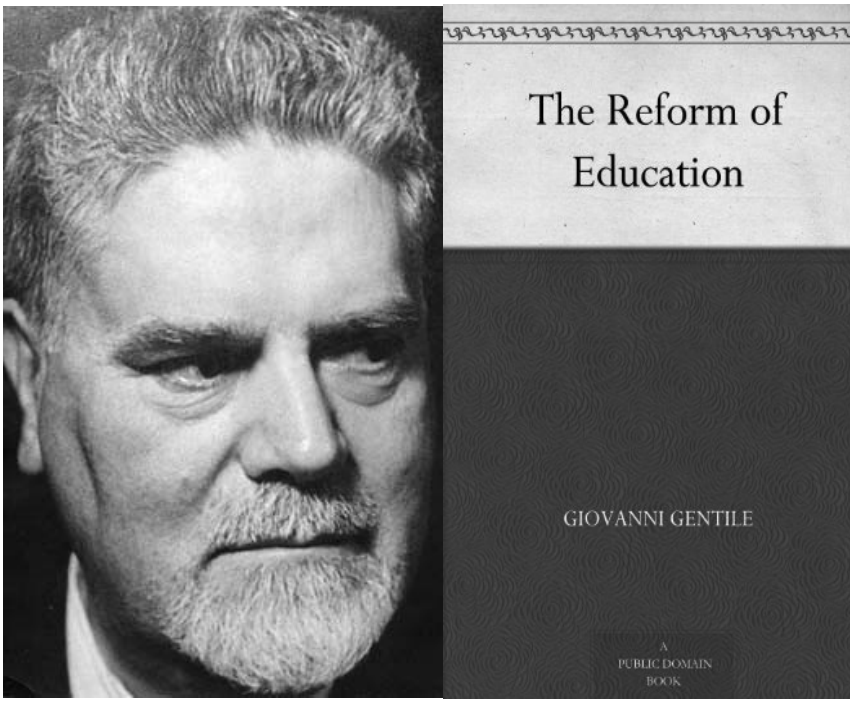
While shaping his educational project, Gentile had adopted an idealistic worldview. Following this, school had to be established within the bounds of culture. With the development and transformation of culture, schools indeed needed to undergo changes. He believed that education getting divorced from culture was the reason for crisis of his times. Far from being just buildings, schools were the centers of culture, he postulated. Culture is what people inherit through traditions, even when people were ignorant of what exactly was their culture; it was only within concrete history the full-fledged development of personality could be possible. Hence, fascist pedagogy is about human personality thoroughly being fused



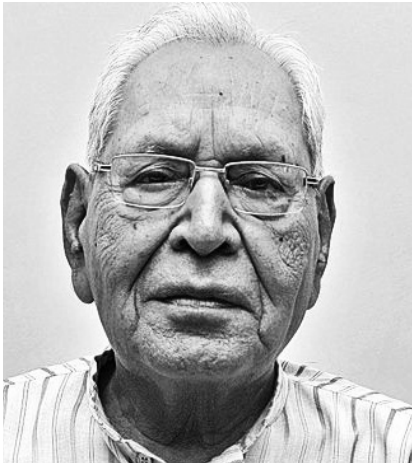
Govanni Gentile

into culture .The core idea of such education being manufacturing living culture, fascist project aims for bringing forth large collective of culturally organized individuals.

If one were to ask fascists about the ultimate objective of education, their reply would be that education is nothing but the process of making and development of the spirit. However, Gentile does not offer any specific definition of spirit. While it can be seen that he does not view spirit as some distinct entity vis a vis body, there are ample examples for his usage of the term as synonym for public conscience. Thus, Gentile while bringing to the fore the idea of spirit, also would demolish the duality between mind and body. Culture is imagined by him either as a factor which nourishes the spirit or as the manifestation of spirit itself. In a similar vein, education is also conceived as neither materially perceivable nor subject to the purview of laws applying to the material world. It is rather like one brought about by a superman in some mystical manner. Fascist education opens its way to 'integral' method by numerable approaches. Demolition of differences between the Intellectual and ethical contents of pedagogy, doing away with the distinction between learning and teaching, etc, are part of such approach. Such a scheme of pedagogy will diffuse even inter- disciplinary borders between areas of education .Such a method will consider material realities as abstract and ensconced in spiritual vision. Thus, Gentile's education becomes an attempt to mould 'concrete personality' in the shape of mystical superman, for which teachers and students are culturally prepared by means of a discourse of religiosity .Now, we shall see how Bharat-ization of education in India surprisingly matches with Gentile's project. Gentile's extreme hatred for conventional education method on the one hand and his idea that education was to be used as the tool to bring about imaginary man on the other , do offer several clues about the nature of rapidly changing scenario in India's education.

Bharatisation of Education

Bharatisation of education is not the unique brainchild of presently incumbent Modi administration. In fact, it has been there as an integral part of the BJP's political programme for pretty long time. Attempts toward Bharat-isation of education were initiated by the BJP dominated coalition that had been in power at the centre which preceded the Congress-led UPA government of 2004. Two successive UPA governments since then would rather support the educational reform, thereby strengthening the political agenda of BJP. It was during Mr Murali Manohar Joshi's tenure as education minister in the first BJP-led NDA government that Sanskrit began to be taught as a compulsory subject in schools. Obviously, that was a move to impose Sanskrit, just because it happened to be the favorite language of the ruling elites. One of the main accusations leveled by the BJP against the existing education system is that it was instituted by the western powers in order to serve the interests of colonial rule in India. While it is literally true that Indian students were able to draw inspiration from western culture and cultural role models thanks to lessens taught from school text books, Bharat-isation of education aims through new education policy to offer vedas and puranas as textbooks. Thereby, the latter approaches education from the point of view of Indian spirituality. 2014 election manifesto of the BJP promises changes in the education system which would enable the posterity to take pride in their tradition. It talks about giving utmost importance to the school sector and also rethinking on the process and content of education in schools. Among its agenda items are reforming madrassas and revamping of university education to replace the UGC system with Higher Education Commission. Further, it says that a National Commission would be appointed by the new government which would chart out necessary programmes for thoroughly revamping the educational sector in a span of two years time. (BJP Election Manifesto of 2014, pp 23-24).



Dinanath Batra

Dinanath Batra, who played an influential role at the NCERT research centre during 1998-2004 had been entrusted with the job of 'correcting errors' in history texts taught in schools. As lately as in 2013-14, this professor made news by coercing Penguin to pulp all the published copies of Hindus: An Alternative History authored by the world acclaimed scholar Wendy Doniger. Besides, Dinanath Batra has the additional qualifications of being a member of the central executive of Vidya Bharati. He is also the chief of educational wing of the RSS .He himself has authored many of those 'infamous Gujarat text books'.

Accordingly, the reforms in higher education are being led by an advisory team, which in turn is under virtual control of the RSS. Dinanath Batra, who played an influential role at the NCERT research centre during

1998-2004 had been entrusted with the job of 'correcting errors' in history texts taught in schools. As lately as in 2013-14, this professor made news by coercing Penguin to pulp all the published copies of Hindus: An Alternative History authored by the world acclaimed scholar Wendy Doniger. Besides, Dinanath Batra has the additional qualifications of being a member of the central executive of Vidya Bharati . He is also the chief of educational wing of the RSS .He himself has authored many of those 'infamous Gujarat text books'. His work 'Tejomayi Bharat' is a gem of such text book which abounds in bizarre claims of early Indian advancements in scientific field. In Tejomayi Bharat , Batra 'teaches' that maharshi vyasa could create children from a piece of flesh and that is proof that Indians invented cloning thousands of years ago . In a similar vein, citing the use of pushpaka vimana by Rama, the Hindu God, his text book tells how early Indians were experts in aviation. Harshad Shah, who was a member in the team employed for examining the worth of these text books, has gone on record with this remark, in an interview to Indian Express: Tejomayi Bharat is a book that offers to our pupils insights in culture, patriotism, spirituality and tradition. The book has been rendered in a wonderfully simple language too, to suit the students.

These books were prepared with a view to distributing them among students, free of cost. The Gujarat government's text book committee had selected these text books written in Hindi and translated to Gujarati language.

The 31 member 'Non-Governmental Committee on Education' led by Dinanath Batra has been untiringly at work for three years since it was established under the aegis of the RSS. Among its members was Rajput, a dubious scholar, who had lost his job as vice chancellor, when in 2003 he was caught having plagiarized certain published academic essays. Texts prepared by the said committee came to be widely used not just in Gujarat, but also in many other states. The committee's proclaimed objective is producing a pattern of education that bases itself in the cultural heritage of India. According to this, the contents of text books were to be those promoting values of religious harmony, national integration, and religious and ethical virtues.

Coming to the textbooks of Gujarat, it is Lord Siva himself who gives essential tips on health care. Bharat-isation of text books is actually changing to Hinduisation. Hindu religious symbols, phrases and parables become ploys for burying secularism. There is deliberate attempt in textbooks to glorify Hinduism and to discredit Islam.

What Mussolini -Gentile combine did in Italy is being repeated here by Modi - Dinaath Batra partnership through Bharatisation of education. Gentile had shown how classrooms and textbooks could be manipulated to strengthen Italian nationalism. Defining nationalism and culture in a parochial way is the key element in this project. It is through a reduction of Indian culture to Hindu religious consciousness that the BJP government undertakes the interpretation of Indian heritage and nationality. While representing nationality through religious icons, Bharatisation of education doesn't take into account the sentiments of the religious minorities who are kept out of its purview. Dinanath professes to' correct' the wrongs of the past. It is this tendency to 'correct', "particularly to correct history", that the world always has named fascism. Human being is shaped through history. Time cannot stand still to effect any such correction of bygone eras. Bharatisation of education, hence, is a major political intervention which attempts to root out values of secularism, scientific spirit, and rationality.

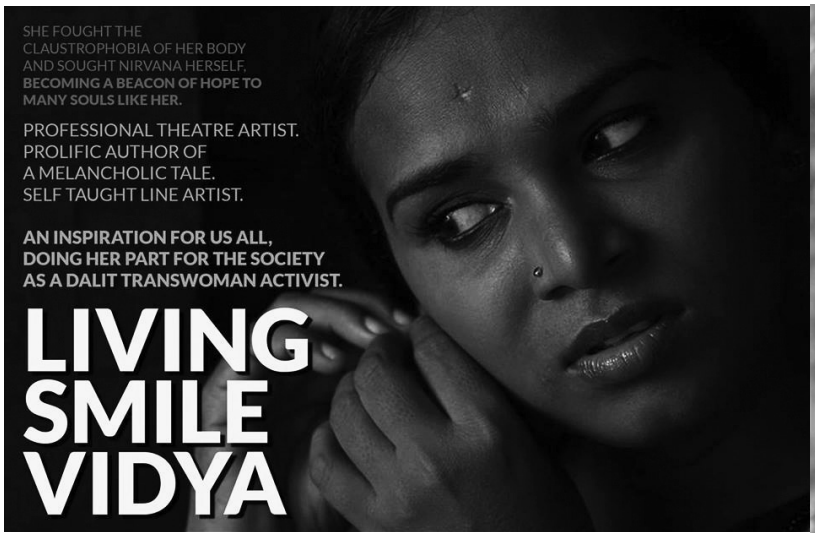
Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler in Munich, Germany

Dr. George K Alex *is a political thinker and writer based in Kerala. He was the former Chairperson of SCM Kerala Region and Currently teaching at St.Thomas College Kozhencherry.*

Interview

(Trans)gender and caste lived experience

Transphobia
as a form of Brahminism



Gee Ameena Suleiman
Kaveri Karthik

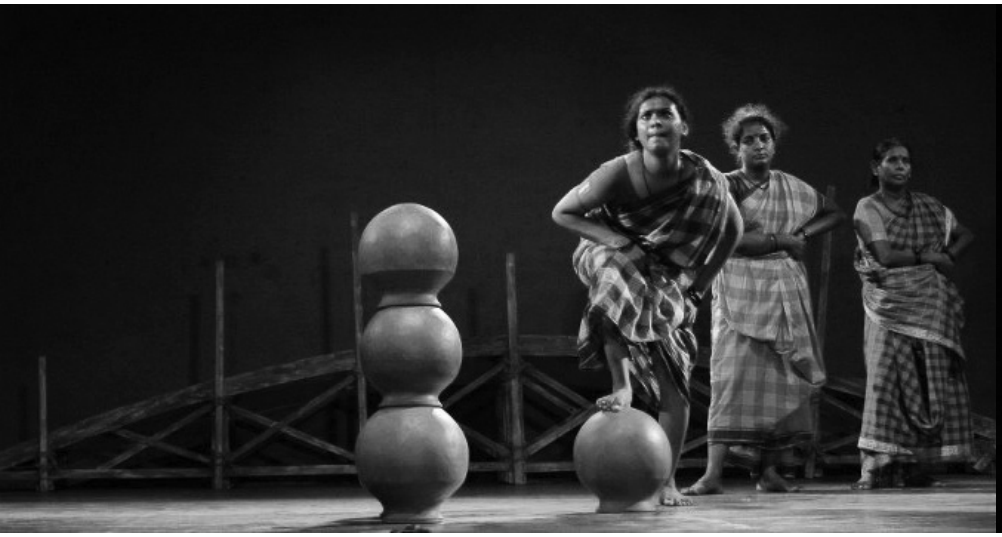
This is the transcript of a conversation between dalit transgender feminist writer and theater artist Living Smile Vidya, who lives and works in Chennai, with her transgender brothers Kaveri Karthik and Gee Ameena Suleiman from Bangalore.

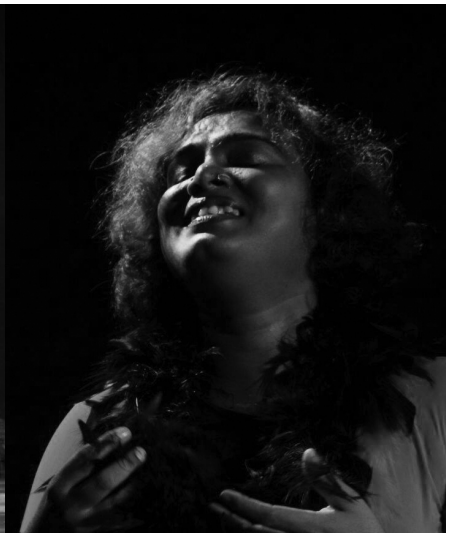
Living Smile Vidya known as Smiley, an inspirational woman from India, actress, film director, the author of the biography titled "I am Saravanan Vidya" (2008), a transgender activist and blogger, recipient of the British Council-Charles Wallace India Trust fellowship to study theater in UK. Hello Smiley!

Kaveri: "Can you tell us a little bit about gender and caste dynamics in your own life while growing up?

Living Smile Vidya: Actually, though we settled in Chennai, we belong to the Arunthatiyar caste in Andhra Pradesh and migrated from there a few generations ago. Our caste is the lowest of the dalits because occupationally we did manual scavenging. So, my mother would have a job everyday doing street cleaning as a government worker, then do domestic work on the side, in several houses for a couple days of the week each. 50% of her earnings would go to her husband. She had to do both house work in our own house as well as work in many jobs outside to make ends meet. My father was an alcoholic and his income contribution to the family was only 40%. But since he had physical control over her income also, I would have to get my school fees from him, though it was actually my mother's earnings. My father would drink and physically and verbally abuse my mother and the rest of us. The whole colony knew about this because the houses are close by and small. In big houses belonging to savarnas also, women suffer but that cannot be seen or heard by us because it happens in the privacy of the thick walls of their house. But at least you can hear dalit women shouting back, threatening to hit

"My relatives in the rural areas were coolie workers (manual laborers) and for them, the owners pour the coffee from a great height into coconut shells. This also would be done only outside their houses so that nothing spills on the floor. If there are washed clothes in these houses, we can't push them aside, can only move around them or bend under them to walk so as to not touch them."





their drunk husbands etc when these fights happen in our colonies which most of the modest, "good wives" of upper/middle caste families cannot even imagine doing.

Kaveri: What has your experience of caste been when you were young?

Living Smile Vidya: "Food in urban areas for my mother who worked as a domestic worker would be served in a simple leaf. So that she doesn't eat in their vessels."

Gee: "But she can clean the vessels for them and then she can touch them, right"?

Living Smile Vidya: "Yes, That is not seen as touching by a dalit. Because then, who will do all their household work? My relatives in the rural areas were coolie workers (manual laborers) and for them, the owners pour the coffee from a great height into coconut shells. This also would be done only outside their houses so that nothing spills on the floor. If there are washed clothes in these houses, we can't push them aside, can only move around them or bend under them to walk so as to not touch them. Sometimes, when visiting, I would walk from one dalit compound to the other which were separated by savarna colony. To go between houses you had to walk all the way around to avoid these house compounds and their lands, because they would yell if you walk near their property. Even in urban areas you find that dalit colonies will be pushed to the outskirts of the city but the major portion of the work in the cities is done by them. Untouchability is practised in urban areas also, but the forms are less direct sometimes than in rural areas.

Gee: " I have heard that earlier in Kerala, even the shadow of dalits should not fall in the way of the upper castes . Dalits had to move backwards wiping their footprints if an upper caste had to walk the same path.

Living Smile Vidya: "Yes and before my time even the mundaani of women [upper cloth across chest] would have to be removed when upper castes came across you on the path. There was a big protest that happened over this issue in Tamil Nadu – ThoL seelai porattum – and then this practice stopped before my generation.

Kaveri: Yes, a friend Gangatharan told me about this ThoL seelai porattum, this struggle which he said started among Nadars Travancore against the practice of obc women being forced to not cover their chests

Kaveri: Did your experience being raised as a child who was considered male by the family and brought up as a boy, but identifying and later living as a woman give you a heightened sense of the privileges given to men over women? For example, the first time I wore men's clothes and walked down the street, I realized ways in which I was oppressed as a woman that were invisible to me when the world looked at me and saw a woman. I realized suddenly I could actually look around at eye level, without lewd stares from men or disapproving stares from older people – and I realized the social pressure on women to look at the ground as they walked – something I knew in the back of my head but hadn't realized the full extent of until I dressed in men's clothes and was liberated from it. It sharpened my feminism. In a similar way for you, seeing both male privilege from society and identifying with women and later living as a woman and facing the dangers of being a woman and a transperson, can you talk about the way this journey has shaped your understanding of gender oppresison?

Living Smile Vidya: I was a woman in my heart as a child, even as I was being given male privilege. I hated it because I dearly loved my sisters and mothers [my biological mother as well as stepmother]. I identified with them and was so angry that my sisters didn't get the same things as me. I was mistaken to be male and couldn't yet articulate that I was a girl and so I was educated much more than my sisters. I still always believed my older sister was very smart, smarter than me, and her life would be very different now if she had been educated. She is doing the same work as my mother only because she was born a biological woman and similar to my mother is the backbone of the household. But from the beginning I was able to influence my stepmother to be different and so her daughter – my sister, is now studying final year B.C.A. This makes me very happy as despite being female born, she has joined the first generation of our family getting educated along with me.

In the beginning, I was thinking, I should act in a way that everyone will recognize that I am a woman. I was very shy, like the way people expect girls to be. I would dress very modestly, etc. Even then, as a child I would dream of myself as a saree wearing, sword yielding, woman. Like of the kind that Bharatiyar described in his writings. Bharatiyaar was a Brahminical feminist, but still, at that time, I wanted to be like that.

In the beginning, I was thinking, I should act in a way that everyone will recognize that I am a woman. I was very shy, like the way people expect girls to be. I would dress very modestly, etc. Even then, as a child I would dream of myself as a saree wearing, sword yielding, woman. Like of the kind that Bharatiyar described in his writings. Bharatiyaar was a Brahminical feminist, but still, at that time, I wanted to be like that. Bharatiyar was like the Tagore of Tamil literature, a great writer, poet, musician, well-versed in many languages, and a radical thinker, part of the independence struggle and very strongly against caste and gender oppression. We read Bharatiyar at school and college, but having read so much of his work, I can still feel some remnants of his Brahminism – for example, he fought caste by performing the upanayanam, the sacred thread ceremony, on a young dalit boy to "convert" him into a Brahmin, instead of fighting Brahminism altogether. Similarly his vision of a woman was as an embodiment of Shakti, and at first I wanted to be this kind of woman.

Later I realized that since all women get oppressed under patriarchy, and trans women and dalit women through the combined might of patriarchy with casteism and transphobia, I might as well have a loud mouth and be assertive than take everything silently – to be a strong but silent woman was not enough. I decided that I do not want to be modest and soft spoken to please others or to fit the ideal of a "good woman".

Kaveri: How did your Sex Reassignment Surgery a few years ago change your feelings on this? Many transgender people have spoken of their struggle against the gender they are brought up in, and many transgender women are agonized by the pressure on the one hand to behave in a way that is clearly socially recognized as female, while feeling outraged at the way women are treated and expected to behave – basically the double pressures that come from transphobia due to being perceived as a transgender, and male chauvinism from being perceived as women. Some have said that only after their sex reassignment surgery when their bodies were universally recognized as female in the public realm, the pressure to assert their femininity decreases and they can react to the oppression of being a woman. What was your experience?

Living Smile Vidya: Before my nirvana [sex change operation] I was definitely anxious to prove my femininity. I had a lot of these thoughts about the injustice of the oppression against women and transgenders but I was struggling from day to day to just get enough food to eat, to eat as little as possible so I could save anything extra I made from begging. I couldn't be active on fighting for anything but survival. After my nirvana, I felt physically like a woman and then, it became easier for me to survive and to start to question my own model of femininity. With age also, my understanding of these things improved and I began to question femininity and masculinity and fixed gendered roles and behaviours more strongly.

Transgender discrimination is more severe, I feel, than dalit experience in urban areas. On the one hand, transgenders can only get homes in dalit bastis as these are the only places where we can get any acceptance – but we usually have to pay higher rent than others. It hurts a bit when dalits discriminate, even though they discriminate less than savarnas – as it feels like my own people shouldn't discriminate against me at all due to our shared understanding of oppression as dalit. It is paradoxical for me to face added social disadvantage as a transgender. I feel like oppressed groups should try to understand each other's pain and work together.

Kaveri: Can you compare caste discrimination and transgender discrimination, for example with respect to being forced into some occupations like manual scavenging for dalit communities or begging and sex work for transgenders. How similar or different are they and what has your experience of this been?

Living Smile Vidya: Transgender discrimination is more severe, I feel, than dalit experience in urban areas. On the one hand, transgenders can only get homes in dalit bastis as these are the only places where we can get any acceptance – but we usually have to pay higher rent than others. It hurts a bit when dalits discriminate, even though they discriminate less than savarnas – as it feels like my own people shouldn't discriminate against me at all due to our shared understanding of oppression as dalit. It is paradoxical for me to face added social disadvantage as a transgender. I feel like oppressed groups should try to understand each other's pain and work together.

Hijras or tirunangais as we prefer to be called in Tamil Nadu, at least have a community traditionally with an entire system of support [though at times, even the guru-chela system is oppressive and exploitative]. We can go to shops and ask for money. Female to male transpeople on the other hand, also known as tirunambi, can't ask for money in public and do not have this traditional community.

I feel like transgenders who are working class have no dignity of labour because socially they are allowed to only beg or do sex work. But some dalit groups have taken back dignity of labour by assertions from within the community. Like daily wage labourers in agriculture can at least assert that they are making food with their own hands for the whole country to eat or artisans can claim the status of artists, but not transgenders yet. We are reduced to the status of just beggars or sex workers. This is similar to what some dalit groups have faced as manual scavengers. This occupational fixity in both dalit and transgender communities, is done by closing off alternative options. Thus, manual scavenging becomes an occupation enforced on dalits through the exclusion of access to other jobs; in a similar way begging and sex work are forced occupations for transgenders through exclusion from other jobs. But inspite of this, we retain some of our dignity in the face of this exclusion .

To retain dignity we have to think these jobs are normal. Manual scavenging and begging just becomes like a practice. Children are mentally prepared by society to think it is normal. In school when they would ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" We dalits wouldn't say doctor, engineer, but our boys would say for example, "I will work

in a cracker factory". Girls would smile and not respond. Dalits are socially conditioned to internalise that they are meant to do only some jobs and don't dream to do anything else or get the access to education and alternative jobs. Transgenders also when they first realize that they are trans women, they immediately think they will have to beg, because they see transgenders only in one place – begging on the street. So, by repetition historically and by not providing alternative options, these jobs become fixed. Amongst dalits with reservation, some changes have happened in the sense that access to educational facilities have opened up a bit but numerous other ways are used to torture us till we drop out or commit suicide or fail. Even in reservations, it is not the lowest of the dalits like us who benefit, but the more elite. This is somewhat like the savarna transgenders who have NGO funding claiming to represent the community and getting all the benefits. This kind of representational politics gives a false picture of progress of these communities from this funding model.

Kaveri: Is transgender a kind of caste? The Backward Classes Commission under C.S Dwarakanath has recommended that transgenders be included as OBCs for reservation. What do you think about this?

Living Smile Vidya: We need reservation on the basis of gender, not caste. But it has to be more complex. But I definitely do not want to be OBC. And you will understand why as a dalit, I do not want to come under the OBC category of all things! Puttings transgenders under a oppressed caste category erases the caste priviliges that savarna transgenders have. It is better for us to have caste and gender based reservation so that dalit women and dalit transgenders get representation. Otherwise reservation will only benefit savarna transgenders and dalit men.

Kaveri: Is there caste within the transgender community? Do people lose caste as they enter hijra system?

Living Smile Vidya: There is not so much caste in the hijra community because everyone's names are changed. As you enter the hijra community, you lose location, language, last name. A few members of the transgender community who are dalit have figured out I am dalit and have secretly told only me because they knew I'm dalit. They have also told me not to talk about eating beef so that no one in the transgender community figures out I am dalit. Some castes though are very proud, such as Thevars and Pillaimars, who are always proudly asserting their caste. I have seen some kothis and hijras and say things like, "I might be a transgender like you, but I am a Thevar in the village". Even I, have once pretended to be Thevar when I was confronted by an auto driver for smoking and it was a dangerous situation. I was taking his auto late at night. I saw the picture of a Thevar leader Muthuramalingam Thevar in the auto, so I put on a Madurai accent and pretended to be a Thevar girl to save my skin. He was so impressed he asked if could ask my father for my hand in mariage! [Laughs]. There I was, a dalit, transgender woman passing off as an upper caste biological woman to save my skin and getting a marriage proposal at 2 A.M!

Gee: When you go for a jamaat or some such ceremony in the hijra community, if you even touch a senior hijra's saree accidentally, you have to pay a fine. Of course this is not a caste practice as it happens if any hijra touches any senior hijra's clothes, but do you think this practice has come from caste untouchability?

Living Smile Vidya: It is like class, it's showing respect. It's not outlawed, but punished with a fine. Since we get no respect outside the community, the elder tirunangais say they have made some rules within like this to get respect with increasing seniority. When I was a younger kothi, I would respect all these traditions but then I found them oppressive and too hierarchical. It is like how victims in some respects become oppressors when they get the opportunity or power. I don't know where this particular association of not touching means respect comes from. You may be right in guessing that it comes from caste practice.

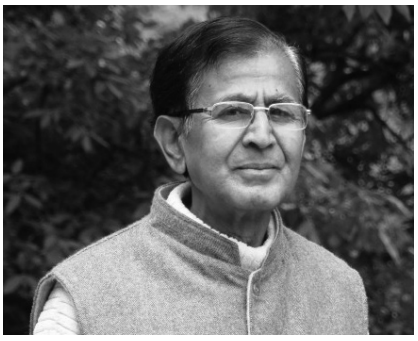
Gee: "Can you talk a bit about how migration plays a crucial role in our search for freedom whether it is as a dalit or as a transperson. For example, I read in Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography how he says that when he migrated from his village, he could "pass" as a non dalit. Similarly, we know that all of us as

transpeople, move out of our native towns to find freedom and also "pass" more as women or men".

Kaveri: As someone who could pass as a non-dalit, non-trans woman, how you tell other transpeople or dalits that you are one of them. How do you "out" yourself to them?

Living Smile Vidya: One's recognition as dalit or transgender within the village gets removed by migration, but some of the markers still remain. Outing oneself as transgender really depends on how you talk, how you walk. I "pass" most of the time in public as a woman. So, if I want to tell another kothi/hijra that I am also a trans woman, I use our own kothi language to give myself away as one of them. As to outing oneself as dalit, the markers are where you live, how you speak- the dialect, last name etc.

From my experience, it is only non dalits who ask what your caste is. Dalits always know their brothers or sisters when they see us. When I want to find out if someone is a dalit comrade, I just ask a common dalit friend. But mostly, when we speak about dalit issues, we can tell if they are dalit or not. Because of sub castes and feeling of superiority, I am sometimes scared of outing myself as belonging to the arundhati caste [manual scavenging]. There is some discrimination even between different types of dalits. The adi dravida castes are considered superior to us and so even at home, my parents never allowed me to learn my mother tongue, Telugu, because they were afraid that the general public would figure out and discriminate extra against me. But because living spaces are so segregated on the basis of caste, it is easy to know who the dalits are in the village. Among the dalits, the Telugu speakers would be clearly identified as the so-called lowest dalit castes. I never hide from other dalits the fact that I am also a dalit, even if I don't reveal my subcaste. Similarly, I never hide to other trans women that I am also on of them.



Omprakash Valmiki

Kaveri: What do you tell your dalit comrades when you attempt to unify the transgender and dalit struggles?

Living Smile Vidya: I try to explain that they have also been made to feel less human by savarna castes, in a way similar to how society treats tirunangais. I ask them why they can't understand our pain when they have had similar experiences individually and historically. When they ask me, "Why do transgenders beg and not work? You will get more respect if you just work like other people". I say, "Why don't dalits become bankers, doctors, engineers. Why are they still stuck in the same jobs after all these years? Is it because we dalits are not capable? Or because we are lazy and don't want those jobs? Actually it is because of lack of opportunity and discrimination. The same goes for transgenders. If you offer transgenders jobs, they will stop begging and work hard and live with dignity like others in society. Begging itself is very hard work". Dalit comrades need to fight patriarchy and transphobia along with casteism.

Transphobia is a type of brahminism. It gives us no other option but to do "dirty" jobs like sex work and begging and then calls us "dirty", just like caste system did with dalits. When I draw parallels like that, my dalit comrades understand better and work with me.

Kaveri: What do you think about unifying the oppressed peoples' struggles?

Living Smile Vidya: If I give a talk on, transgender issues, I tell people they have to join with our struggle if they believe in social justice. I always talk about working together, along with women's struggle. But I know that most so called feminists think that I am a man in woman's clothing. They would treat me as if I am not quite a woman. The general public accepts me as a transgender quite readily so why do activists take longer? Some of these feminists will wear fabindia clothes and their gold and think women must be modest. They talk as if the strongest and most satisfying thing in the world is to give birth and take care of their children.

As a trans woman, though the fact that I cannot have biological children, is used against me to make me feel less like a "real" woman, I sometimes feel grateful that I have been spared being thought of just as a baby producing machine! They also are very patronizing about caste and can talk progressively but will have a dalit woman making tea and serving them at their meetings instead of also including her and learning from her experiences.

Dalit movements also have to be worked with internally, so that their perspective on gender broadens. In another way, savarna feminists should broaden their perspective to include trans women and also work really hard to lose their caste bias.

But ultimately we have to understand that we are all people under attack whether the enemies are Brahmanism and caste, gender oppression, patriarchy, NGOs, the State, capitalism, multinational companies, Western neo imperialism etc. We must all unify to fight an effective struggle against these monsters.

Homage

James Massey

I lost an old friend today (March 3). Dr. James Massey of the Church of North India, pioneering Dalit theologian and former Member, National Commission for Minorities, Government of India, passed away in Patna. He had gone for a heart procedure to do with his pacemaker, and collapsed during the process. He will be greatly missed.

James, a theology scholar, and an ordained priest of the Church of North India, was a Dalit from the Punjab, and deeply rooted in his cultural heritage. I got to first know him when he was general secreretary of the ISPCK, a major publishing house. This is from his LinkedIn profile: In an International Seminar at Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi in May, 2000 organized by the Institute of Missiology, Aachen, Germany the founding Director Dr. James Massey was inspired by prominent liberation theologians to establish a Centre for Dalit Studies in India. This vision was enthusiastically endorsed and facilitated by prominent leaders like Dr. Frans J.S. Wijsen, Dr. Erhard Kamphausen andDr. Marco Moerschbacher in Europe and in India by Archbishop Malayappa Chinnappa, the Rt. Rev. Dr. A. George Ninan, Fr. S. Lourduswamy (Co-founder), Sr. Shalini Mulackal and Fr. Monodeep Daniel. Subsequently, the Centre for Dalit Studies was formally launched on September 28, 2001 in New Delhi by the first Chairperson of the Board of Management, Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa. Later in 2004 the Centre for Dalit Studies was re-christened as Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies (CDS) to include other marginalized communities including the minorities within the scope of its activities. So far, CDS has been working as a special wing of Community Contextual Communication Centre, a non-Governmental organization. In 2013, it has become a legal body, and has been re-christened as Centre for Dalit/Minorities Studies (Trust) [CDS (T)]. This change was made in order to bring CDS more closely to changing socio-religious and legal context of India.

John Dayal

(Dr. John Dayal is a Christian Political Activist based in New Delhi. He is a member of the National Integration Council (NIC) of India, Secretary-General of the All India Christian Council.)

Down Town to Kiss of Love : *Problems of* Public Reasoning

Ajith Kumar AS
K Ashraf

Certain debates are constructed around the deceptive dialectics of progressive versus retrograde. The scheme of either/or motivates us to fall in line on the point of saying either an unequivocal yes or a categorical no. Fissures in the society and politics are sometimes rendered invisible through such a contrived dialectics.

Anna Hazare's anti-corruption campaign held in the year 2011 and widely celebrated in the media is a case in point. Anathema against corruption slaps on our shoulder the 'responsibility' of an ethical position in support of the campaign, entitling us, by not jumping on the bandwagon or keeping a sceptical distance, the tag of corruption-tolerant. The campaign was trumpeted around as a phenomenon to be supported sans political divides. Gandhians and leftists joined the campaign without criticism, tripping over the question as to who can keep away from an agitation against corruption.

Almost everyone turned a deaf ear to the critiques against the campaign, especially from the Dalit-Bahujan front. Later what immunized the Left parties against the campaign were not its political problems; rather Hazare's Sangh Parivar links. A similar effect has been created by the Kiss of Love campaign. Who can oppose kissing, love and display of affection? Who can't help agitating against such a grave social problem as moralist policing? How can we approach the civic discourses around such campaign beyond the simplistic dialectic of either/or? Are there no other avenues open to take a perspective on the campaign? It is critical that the campaign obliterates many political issues surrounding the attack of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the BJP, against Down Town, a coffee shop in Calicut. Beyond those, this article tries to tease out different political discourses about the Kiss of Love campaign or such a form of agitation.

Public Space:
The crisis of imagination

Discourses advanced by the Kiss of Love campaigners are tied around the issue of freedom in the public space. Such discourses take for granted definitions of the public space. It's critical, therefore, to put in perspective the meanings generated of the public space.

There is such a transition in the social mores as to problematize the private/public divide. Public spaces are deplorably small nowadays owing to the surveillance cameras and security professionals installed in parks and shopping malls and the ubiquitous presence of mobile phones (with its cameras). Public spaces are said to have limited privacy. Does not the kiss of love campaign demand the same seen from another perspective? The campaign demands a private space in the public sphere where none else should intervene in the freedom of two or more people. The loss of privacy has been posed as a vital socio-political issue in the online space as well as in the context of identification measures taken by the state through such measures as Aadhaar. Do the campaigners signify that there should be the same freedom in the public space that we enjoy in the private space, or that; in other words, public space should be rendered as nothing but an extension of the private space?

It is true that the discourses advanced by the Kiss of Love are centred on the dialectics of individual freedom in the public and private spheres. But is that of the same relevance as the issue of social groups mobilized around religious, caste and communal identities defining and categorizing the public and private spheres? Are there not differences in the status and stature of public spaces and the public as regards social dignity? For example, shopping malls, pubs and five star hotels are categorized as exclusive spaces, where the elite classes socialize without sacrificing their familial and social statuses. They are nothing other than their private spheres. But spaces like fish market, where subaltern groups mostly gather and which different social groups consider as a predominant public space for social interaction (hence more 'public') are not reckoned as having the social dignity.

Exclusion is a major problem in defining public space. Though gender is a category we seriously think about in connection with the issue of exclusion, we tend not to take into consideration the categories of religion, caste, community and colour. Sexual attacks against women in the public space have clearly explained the nature of encumbrance in the public space. But how open is the public space for religious and linguistic minorities, migrant labourers, beggars, the poor, Dalits and Adivasis? How do they imagine and experience the public space?

Public space is more an interpretive space than a pre-given space. It is no longer an issue-free space but something determined and divided along the lines of caste/religion/community and colur and the power relations maintained in and between these groups. These spaces are defined through the processes of inclusion and exclusion. It is such a space where everyone is conditioned in one way or other. Therefore, public and private spaces can't be spoken of without problematizing the conditions and the processes of inclusion and exclusion.

It is also problematic to consider the public space as a space for unconditional 'freedom'. Public spaces are so constructed and maintained through several controlled mechanisms. As the public space is implicit in the construct of nation state, it is conditioned upon state surveillance, modern secular regulations and controls. State permission or legitimacy predetermines the expressions of body in the public space. While speaking for liberation, everyone engages in the public space through negotiations within the control of the state. In other words, liberal bodies who foreground liberation seek to express it in the very space constrained by the technologies of power, including the state.

So, can't non-liberal bodies express bodily negotiations in different control mechanisms? Are there not spaces for non-liberal negotiations regarding bodies? By thinking about exclusion problems that public spaces carry become starkly clear. The stance taken by the Kerala police of chasing out migrant labourers (from north/north eastern regions of India) from Gandhi Park, a public park in Thiruvananthapuram and foreclosing the space to them was justified as an action meant for safeguarding public space. Though the question of who is being safeguarded against whom is relevant, the control and maintenance of public space is generally supposed to be the tasks of the state.

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Closely related to the issue is the way each community defines and

A Protest against kiss of love activists.

divides the public and private spaces. Studies on clothing say that dress has become a problematic space delimiting the boundary of the private and public. The privacy of body is defined by dress. Religious dresses play the dual roles of signifying identity on the one hand and of defining the theological division of the public and private on the other hand.

Whether temporal differences and change of meaning in different times influence our imagination of public space is a question worth pondering over. Public spaces are imagined in diverse ways in different times. Historically speaking, public placeshave had different cultural connotations. At a time when the public roads were foreclosed to the untouchable castes, how could they be termed the public space? Can spaces delimited by the mechanism of caste be called public? Later public spaces came to be redefined through anti-caste struggles, subaltern politics and the possibilities brought open by the colonial modernity. Cinema, political movements and public schools give space to communities beyond the bounds set bythem. Upper caste assumptions viewed public space as a troubled, contaminated space rendered untouchable by the lower class presence. When did such a space become a moral space?

Are bodily expressions homogenous in the public space? Elite castes/ social groups don't consider street as a safe space. It is still a 'lower' space, inhabited by the 'others' such as drunkards, prostitutes, thieves, manhandles, smugglers and migrant labourers. When the debates about Delhi rape were hogging the headlines, the accusing fingers were pointed at the migrant labourers hailing from Bihar and other rural spaces. Almost always, those who are suspected of morality policing are culturally "lower" sections of people including auto drivers and coolies. Males from elite classes are not arrested, imprisoned and subjected to media trail. Why are males belonging to the subaltern groups being implicated on the question of morality policing? Why are subaltern males being imagined as encumbering free sexual lives? Is not the word morality policing insufficient to tease out the problems?

Does policing maintain social mores?

Are social mores and discourses of a time maintained by external policing? Are not social mores and regulations entwined in the complex web of religious and secular ethos such as family values, concepts of personal morality, state regulations, modernity, discourses on sexuality, religious and caste discourses etc.? Rules and constraints work through internal more than external censures. Morality in other words exists in everyone in diverse ways. There are submissions, ruptures and negotiations in it. For example family morality in Kerala exists through disruptions and negotiations. Family discourses are inextricably intertwined with the concepts of illegitimacy, adultery and incest. Other cases in point are the censor board which determines the normal/decent and 'obscene' in cinema and the political moral-

ity respected and celebrated by the media. For example the reason why the sexual 'transgressions' of political figures become a staple of news, is the morality consciousness internalised by the media. There should be studies on the internal, self-regulated, if invisible internal policing inside modern, secular institutions. Following are some features of the moral imaginations in modern societies.

1. People in modern societies try to erase the blemishes of internally maintained morals in diverse areas of life by inflicting it upon an external /vigilante group. The same holds true about the definition of modernity. Modernity defines itself against savages and conservatives. Those who oppose violence in the name of morality do it by tagging religious groups and conservatives with the violence. The problem comes out of a skewed notion of policing as being external. Thereby, they could place themselves outside the discourses of policing and imagine themselves as the reformed ones.

2. 'Pre-modern' elements such as religion and caste are imagined by the liberal modern self as impediments on progress. Caste, religion, lives based on them, determinations motivated by them, power centred on them, struggles inspired by them are not understood to be part of modern living and modern self. Progress is as an antonym of religion. Whether religion is compatible with democracy and modernity is a question that is posed against religious communities by the 'modern'. Modernity can get away from its dilemmas by slapping them on religion.

3. Just as we behave in the public space under self-regulations through internal policing, we are hardly concerned about policing in the form of police officers and surveillance cameras in the public space including parks. Teens are often handpicked by the police from public spaces. Under the diatribe against religion, these regulations in the name of morality are camouflaged.

4. The way modern Kerala life predominantly defined by the Leftist morality is represented in debates on morality gives us enough possibilities to tease out the problem of internal policing. The mention of sexual life of erstwhile Communist leaders during the time of underground political activism caused DYFI activists to manhandle writer Paul Zacharia. There was not a movement or protest against the vandalism. This might be because religion was not implicated in the act. In the year 2008, during a state public meeting of CPM, party state secretary Pinaryi Vijayan exhorted his party members to behave themselves as it was not 'UshaUthup's music program' . The left moral ethos against UshaUthup's music also had worked in West Bengal where her events were banned in government institutions by CPI minister Jatin chakroborty in 1983 . The hegemony of morality established by SFI in Kerala campus is to be understood in this context. But such a policing can be seen escaping from criticism under its secular label. Morality using the excuse of secularism should be separately discussed.

Secular procedures regarding morality and Religion

The 'Return' of religion: Secular morality gets away from censure by incriminating the return of religion for the same. The elevated morality and enlightenment of secularism is maintained through the process of displacement of the problems of secular power into the sphere of religion. The social common sense has it that religion is a unalterable, and freezed in its essence while secularism is free from all pitfalls so much that if the secular appears to exhibit some of its problems , it is interpreted as being either a deviation to religion or an failure in its nature. For example, in the cartoon of a newspaper about the Kiss of Love, the police officer who appears to discipline the protesters transfigures into a saffron activist. Does it not mean that the police could take action against the protesters by ceasing to be secular? We have also ceased to reflect that violence and discrimination were possible from a secular framework. For example, among those who protested Kiss of Love agitation, there were movements like KSU and it was the UDF government which forcibly suppressed the agitation. However, the commonplace conclusion was that those who raised any criticism against the agitation were all fundamentalists and are 'two sides of the same coin'. In many discussions on the issue, KSU's stance was construed as a deviation to religion from the secular, nationalist politics. Another problem is the sublimation by the secular logic of Sangh Parivar (the saffron brigade) to a mere moral police force, thereby letting them off the hook of more dangerous crimes it orchestrated like genocide.

Religion as a target of secular allegation: Religion appears in secular discourses as a space to shower

its allegations of its own problems down (violence, oppression, denial of diversity, control over body and sexuality etc). Secularism ontologically defines itself by generating such a difference from religion. Secularism is maintained as a specific power centre by so cunningly 'keeping away' from its own problems.

The secular concern about the unison of religious behaviours: that Religions behave in the same manner through the denial of love; majoritarian and minoritarian forms of religion work in the same manner; all religions ultimately attack secular/leftist public sphere; religions retract the hallowed enlightenment values in Kerala and that Religious movements unleash onslaught against the civic society. These are the stereotypical secular critiques of religion. Not only is religion essentialized as being the opposite of the secular; but any different deliberation about religion is precluded. The anti-democratic assumption about religions as their being the birds of a feather has been uncritically accepted. Moreover, Kiss of Love has been construed as a secular movement which could expose the 'true colours' of religions. Sangh parivar is merely understood as a family of 'religious' organization through this discourse.

Secularism as a negative definition of religion: Secular can't exist without defining and discoursing on religion according to its needs. The tactics is to essentialize religion as its diametric opposite. As many post-secular observations hold, modern secular discourses do not characteristically stand on an artificial division between secular and religion, but as a power centre which maintains religion in relation to the secular.

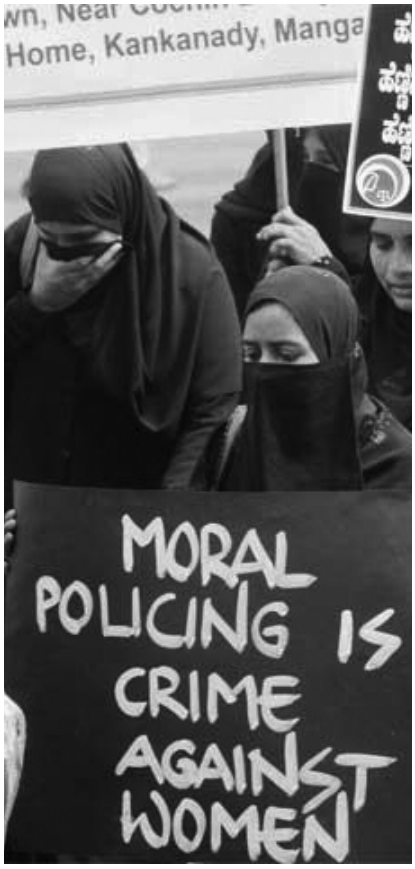
Where religion transfigures as Islam:

As pointed out by many scholars religion is translated into Islam in the nationalistic, secular public discourses in India. In other words, as far as secular discourses are concerned, Islam is easily tagged as conservative. Common sense has it that the Hindu society has become modern and secular. Public discourses on Kiss of Love bear the same assumption. It is also held in this context that the Hindu society has been a sexually liberal and has become rigidly closed and conservative owing to the influences of Semitic faiths including Islam. Hindu moral values are imagined not to contravene the secular values. But Islam bears the burden of immutability, conservatism and incapacity of being modern and secular

The way the Muslim appears in Kiss of Love debates

When the DownTown coffee shop in Calicut was attacked, there were discussions about it being a Muslim issue as the shop was run by Muslims. But such a response was quickly dismissed as unwarranted and communal. When a counter argument was raised that a Muslim firm was attacked under the guise of safeguarding morality, the possibility of an anti-muslim angle was opposed downright. The YuvaMorcha raid was construed as an incident in the chain of the moral policing incidents in the state. The agitation was hoisted on the pedestal of an assumption that raising the Muslim angle of the issue would lead to communal conflagration.

We understand the raid as a part of conspiracies against Muslim cultural and commercial firms, cultural prejudices as in the assumption about intellectual Jihad, and state interventions like raiding. Prejudices against not only eateries, but publishing houses, research houses, media institutions, political and economic institutions, intellectuals, writers, translators, researchers and publishers have become visible in Calicut as everywhere. Yuvamorcha raid has to be seriously seen as a Sangh Parivar onslaught beyond an



immediate social and cultural deviation. Public debates and the public sphere have erased certain events like the raid from its memory. The way public sphere remembers and includes Muslim is relevant in this context.

Quite different from the issue, but related closely to it, despite being kept secret, was the attack of the Sangh Parivar brigade of a student's hostel under the control of a Muslim student's organisation located at Eranjippalam near Calicut. The inmates were threatened on the point of dagger at the broad daylight. The hostel was asked to be closed down and the non-Muslim inmates were threatened to leave the space. When the office-bearers were asked why they did not approach the police and register complaint, they remarked that such a move would lead to further attacks from the outfit or to the smooth functioning of the institution. They also fear the public anathema against Muslim organisations raising complaint against the Sangh Parivar. The

problem has two dimensions. The first is related to the way the state, hegemonic cultural politics and Sangh Parivar deal with Muslims- the way external policing works in the issue. The second dimension is the internal censoring of Muslim organisations through the assumption that raising the complaint against the Sangh Parivar outfit would lead to problems. So problems are repressed as community secrets from the public sphere. The secret spaces of othered communities signify the crisis of simplistic imagination of the public/private divisions.

The hegemonic discourses which erased the Muslim or 'communal' angle from the Down Town attack brought the same to the forefront after the first episode of the Kiss of Love campaign at Eranakulam. Here, the 'rioting/conservative' and 'moralistic Muslims' came to be at the centre stage. When the Muslim angle was concealed during the attack, the Muslim angle came to be one of the main the focus during the kiss of love campaign. This is why morality is being reduced to a religious (Muslim) problem. An anti-Muslim discourse was created in such a way as to obliterate the role of Sangh Parivar. During a discussion on the Down Town attack, MB Rajesh MP, a DYFI leader, described the Sangh Parivar attack as Talibanism. The word, adopted as a jargon in the secular politics, connotes Muslim in such a way as to signify Muslim as moral police thereby matching Sangh Parivar with Muslim.

After the Ernakulum episode the two-sides-of-a-same-coin theory was adopted to club the Muslims organisations and the Sangh Parivar together. It was said that though Sangh Parivar was understood to be deviant, the true colours of Muslim organisations were exposed. Wolf in sheep's clothing is a metaphor used against Muslim organisations. Through this differences in the Muslim politics and the defence it sets were tried to be erased. Secular discourses consider Muslim organisations as having a hidden agenda to be exposed in certain contexts. This is a far cry from a creative and critical intervention in the Muslim politics.

The emergence of new political movements among Muslims came to be obliterated. The new political awakening in the aftermath of Mandal and Babari phase was thus rejected downright. By clubbing the 'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian' 'communalism' together, the secular consciousness justified the Sangh Parivar assumptions about 'Muslim communalism'. (GyanendraPandey's observations about the category communalism are remarkable in this context). In short, the Muslim attitude towards Kiss of Love was considered to be a litmus test of the Muslims' adaptability to secular ethos.

The (im)possibility of a homogenous moral value

Kiss of love brings to fore the symbols of universal love. This is being put forward as an universal standard which everyone has to achieve. Some of us still harbour a mythical sexual freedom in the west to be emulated and achieved by the 'non-western' world. The liberal 'West' is thus imagined as a progressive space and a liberated zone that is the ultimate for someone thinking about sexuality or love . Need everyone share this imagination and harbour the myth. (Also the new social situation which imagines body as an open space for attraction and as being part of liberal political right contradictorily situates it in the boundary of capitalist market, as new studies on body and power in western societies show).

Those who sublimate love don't consider the complexities created by the social elements like caste in love and marriage. They are hardly concerned about the problem of seeing love outside everything social life and transcending barriers including caste. They don't advance any struggle which shake the caste-ridden family mores constructed around endogamy. In the context of Kiss of Love campaign it was said that it contravenes 'modern untouchability'. 'Untouchability' is meant here as the moralist restriction of gendered bodies to touch each other, sit together or make friendships . but if we try to understand 'Untouchability', is not just a problem of touch; it is a whole set of discourses and structural discrimination based on caste.

When the term 'untouchability' is used as part of an hollow rhetoric separating it from history of untouchability as a caste practice the presence of untouchability in the modern sphere is rendered invisible as if 'untochability' in the 'past' based on caste has been replaced by untouchability based on gender. This is part of the liberal understanding of caste as something of the past.

Does Kiss of Love bear assumptions of being a civilizing mission to de adopted by everyone? Do those who vigorously protest external controls on morality bring in its wake its own moral codes? Without enunciation, a universal code applicable to all is brought to fore and enforced. Though liberal politics claims to have respect for all choices, it reserves its judgement against certain choices (wearing purdah, reluctance to kiss in public and keeping beard etc).

Is it necessary that everyone should follow a universal moral code? Is it possible that different communities could believe in different moral codes?(This difference is hardly homogeneous)? What is the commonly accepted moral pattern? Is it possible for someone to follow a moral value inside or outside faith? Can't someone have reservations about the open expression of body espoused by the kiss of love cause and think of body In a different way, like not just a space to liberate but to negotiate different power structures? To enforce morality on others becomes as undemocratic as to prescribe a common morality for others and classify them either progression or retrograde on that basis.

The engagement of people with the politics of the body and the lived experience of the body in relation to the domains of religion, community, and nationality is more complicated than it is viewed from the athouratative secular logic. There is difference in Islam between Sunnis and Shias about the expression of body as part of religious power. Shias are not opposed to inflicting pain on their own body and consider it as a religious ritual. Sunnis have problems in the self-infliction of harm on human body.

The modern Liberal/capitalist economy defines controls and delimits human body through the concepts such as citizen's law. For example, though suicide is rendered as illegal as a liberal choice to end oneself in many nation states, killing in the forms such as state sponsored encounters; law, justice and safety are sanctioned.

It is wrong to insist that everyone should follow the tract paved by the progressives. Are the Kiss of Love activists willing to listen to others? The reservation posed by the black feminists about the slutwalk agitation is remarkable in this context. A letter jointly signed by black feminists said "We are deeply concerned. As Black women and girls we find no space in SlutWalk, no space for participation and to unequivocally denounce rape and sexual assault as we have experienced it." And they demanded the slutwalk organizers to "take critical steps to become cognizant of the histories of people of color and engage women of color in ways that respect culture, language and context."(see-http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/2011/09/23/an-open-letter-from-black-women-to-the-slutwalk/).

Can the progressive movements be reluctant not to tolerate questions posed on it, predetermining that they are essentially wrong? If they are willing to accept differences, why do they not consider that there is a different moral consciousness in the society? Why do they accept their standpoint as unquestionable standards? The question whether a form of agitation should be give access and possibilities to other and marginalised communities is the one worth pondering over.

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The Missing State:

Thoughts on Health in the Indian Context

Biji Jacob Oommen

This is an effort to understand the multidimensional facets of what is broadly conceptualized as and in 'health'. Any of our discourses on health shall be carrying with it the various manifestations of those ideas and dialogues that were generated over the centuries and years and those that are repaired or are innovated throughout in the present period.

In the Indian context, this would refer to the concepts on human body, health, health care (healthcare), medicines and systems of medicines, hygiene and cleanliness and to the various ideologies and phenomenons on health and health care such as holistic health care, religious and spiritual, humanistic, socialistic and capitalistic approach and colonial approach to health care, medical pluralism, medicalization, over medicalization and pharmaceuticalisation. Considering the recent years of developments in health care sector, while the arguments are laid in favour of 'universal health care', the empirical and visible reality is that a majority of the population is still deprived of basic amenities and conditions of living that would ensure 'health for all'. In a nation where not more than five percentage of Gross Domestic Product is ensured for the health care sector, any improvements in the standard of living of Indians, especially at the lower strata of class and caste would be considered as a miracle. The obvious need of the time hence is to bring out unobserved scenarios, unasked questions and unexplored possibilities related to health care sector in India. Here, my attempt is to raise five among them for the sake of further clarity; one that is unassured within the limits of this article.

While heath care for all is an unattained and far seeking goal for the nation, the astonishing factor remains that the nation is the best consumer of cleanliness products to ensure better health such as women napkins and hand wash products. On the contrary, nineteen women were killed during a sterilization surgery in a medical camp in Bilaspur where all the surgeries were conducted on a single bed using almost the same tools kit.

1.The *Conjuring*: Swach Bharath Abhiyaan

There is now a sudden appreciation of brooms and sweepers in India. (This is not a reference to the AAP broom!). Germs and Bacteria have now come out of the tooth paste-soap advertisements and now have entered billion crore worth government files. It is beyond doubt that cleanliness is a prominent factor in ensuring better health care conditions and clean streets and roads do imply to better functioning of the State. But the ideas of good governance as emerged during the later decades of the twentieth century should be also understood beyond the boundaries of the nation limits and should consider global agencies and prominent ideologies are tied with the money flows inside and outside nations. The prominent questions that pop up at this juncture are various: weren't we clean earlier? What are the components that should be washed out and which are the regions and in those regions, which are the communities estranged from clean conditions that ensure good health. Is cleanliness an individual affair or the responsibility of the State and in either way, which individuals, groups or communities historically were and are responsible to clean our public places such as public toilets, roads, drainages and polluted waters. The conjuring exists in the answer to the last question. While it is evident that the manual scavenging had been done over the centuries by specified castes and communities in India and is still continuing with the job, ironically those people do not exist in the eyes of the judiciary. So while manual scavenging does not exist by law in India (as it is banned), doing the job not only does not ensure any provisions and safety but also becomes unlawful.

While heath care for all is an unattained and far seeking goal for the nation, the astonishing factor remains that the nation is the best consumer of cleanliness products to ensure better health such as women napkins and hand wash products. On the contrary, nineteen women were killed during a sterilization surgery in a medical camp in Bilaspur where all the surgeries were conducted on a single bed using almost the same tools kit.

2. *The Patient and The Specialist*: How Healthy Are We

Illness, Clinics, Doctors and Medicines have become increasingly socialized over the years. They together constitute an integral part of the daily life of individuals. Resemblances (of a disease), indications and symptoms grow on the basis of our interactions in everyday life, within the family and through friends, information media and advertisements. The knowledge on our and on healthy conditions of life are determined by these interactions which actually produce a state of fear even about our existence. While

societies in India have not reached a State of accessibility to full and free information, what was assembled by the nature of developments in the recent decades was a form of medicalization of the individuals as well as the communities. Every action resembles a form of symptom towards some or the other form of disease or illness. And every such symptom is told to us for to be diagnosed by a specialist. A universally accepted definition of health is that it should be "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition while is holistic in nature and demands a knowledge base at the both ends of a patient-doctor relationship, on the contrary the dominant system of western Allopathic medicine as practiced assumes patients to be illiterate and doctors to be the providers. A related nature of Allopathic system is the encouragement that it gives to an individual to opt for self-medicalization without consultation or prior knowledge, the result of which is the growing phenomenon of Pharmaceuticalisation (dominance of pharmacy, medicines, medical stores etc on individual lives).

The ideological supremacy of western medicine has been a topic of debate from the period of colonization. The validation for western medicine during the colonial period held authentic due to its acceptance by the colonial rulers, mass awareness programmes against communicable diseases and due to the preaching of Christian missionaries among the lower caste communities. This validation does not approve for the capitalist domination over medicines and health care in the latter half of the twentieth century. Many scholarly works have pointed to the huge flow of second hand medicine markets active in third world countries which supply out dated and dangerous medicines in to the region. The wellness and health of an individual is critical in this context where not very much of information is available on the kind of medicines and treatments available to the contrary that we are too much informed about being ill!!!. This phenomenon becomes crucial in community health programmes in rural India where the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Communities become the victimized.

India is a rich nation with varieties of knowledge systems of medicine still prevailing among different sections of its population. The nature of these systems are confined to geographical boundaries and is very much existent only within the particular cultural and social settings of particular communities. Forms of medicinal systems such as Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani, Siddha, Naturopathy and yoga traditions contains within it, knowledge on multitude of diseases; some through written texts and others through oral traditions.

3.*The Assassin* of our Systems

India is a rich nation with varieties of knowledge systems of medicine still prevailing among different sections of its population. The nature of these systems are confined to geographical boundaries and is very much existent only within the particular cultural and social settings of particular communities. Forms of medicinal systems such as Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani, Siddha, Naturopathy and yoga traditions contains within it, knowledge on multitude of diseases; some through written texts and others through oral traditions. Preservation of these traditional systems would act alternative to the increasingly costly Allopathic system. But the task of preservation is challenged by the penetration of costly Allopathic medicines to the remotest of the regions in India. While there are arguments made by social scientists on the de-casted nature of western medicine that gives access to it for the marginalized communities, on the contrary, it is also of predominant importance to preserve the traditional knowledge systems and incorporate it in the public health care policy of the nation. AYUSH, a recent policy by the Central government even though is an initiative towards this agenda, the exploitative nature of Allopathic system fueled by the public and private policy initiatives is in fact killing the other traditions of systems of medicines in India.

4.*Contagion*: There is a new illness *Under Our Skin*

The world is introduced to several newer diseases and its symptoms each year. The recent spread of Ebola virus is a familiar example of the political economy of the spread of newer diseases. In India, the progress towards capitalist modes of development had been simultaneous with the deteriorating health care and conditions irrespective of States or regions. The magnanimity of our failures in health sector is evident in the human development rankings in which India still remains among the last. Kerala, a State which had been highly praised for the uniqueness in its so called model of development characterizes the most prominent paradox in health care. While the State of Kerala had been successful in maintain health indicators alongside in terms with the global rankings, recent trends of illnesses and fevers prompt doubts regarding the wellbeing of the people in Kerala. Over a decade not less than ten types of viruses and fevers have been identified in Kerala which affects thousands of people especially during the monsoon. A detailed sociological mapping of the regions affected by the said illnesses would clearly indicate the political economy of those illnesses. Patterns of economic development even in a State like Kerala had been unequal and improper whereby a section of the citizens are still denied a state of proper standard of living. Most of the recent reports of the department of health of the Government of Kerala show victimization of large sections of lower caste communities and peasant families affected and diagnosed of the new diseases and illnesses. The comforts and amenities

for a decent living standard are still denied to certain communities and sections which increase the chances of getting affected quickly by communicable illnesses.

The case of Kerala will not definitely be a unique case; rather it proves the intensity of the inequalities and social rigidities determining the political economy of illnesses in a nation. There is always a fear of a new disease under our skin.

5.*The Mission* of *The Good Shepherd*: Revisiting the Welfare State

The last decade saw various government programmes introduced that bearing the word 'mission' in its title. (National Rural Health Mission, National Rural Livelihood Mission etc). A logical response to the evidences proving a decline in welfare measures by the State would be to ask about how the concept of 'Mission' is adopted in these programmes as designed by the State. To discuss on what are the missions of the State in an economy predominantly determined by the market is the need of the hour. Over the last two decades, the nation has witnessed massive structural adjustment programmes in health sector compromising to the pressures of the international agencies and pharmaceutical companies. Major among them is the shift from fully funded health care for the poor to insurance based financing of health care. This shift is evident in the conceptual withdrawal of the State from providing free primary health centres across the nation. Accessibility to good quality health care and provisions along with facilities for the citizens, especially the poor, has become the least priority of the State. Private health care is promoted over the recent years through partially supported insurance based schemes even for the poor.

The activities as envisaged by the various governments in India in social service sectors such as health care, in recent years, shows a shift from the norms of 'Welfare State' to a State with limited activities such as patrolling and surveillance on the citizens. The concern is that a mere > than 5% of the GDP is spend on the health care services in India. A restating of the functions of the 'State' also the 'State' itself is the immediate requirement for the nation that will at least assure that the health care needs of the poorest sections of the societies does not go overlooked.

Converging Thoughts

The original design of this note was to raise some divergent, not-much-linked concerns on health and health care sector in India. The contexts of political economy of health care in India entangle these concerns to condense in it the need for rethinking of the idea of welfare as envisaged in the building of the nation. The multiplicity of the complexity of caste, class and inequality is evident in the process of the State withdrawing from its welfare aspect towards an intense level implementation of market driven, profit oriented policy measures such as in health care sector.

Note: The words in italics in the sub headings are inspired from English movies with the same titles

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PK

The Curious Case of a Secular Modern Alien

To rethink the religious is also to rethink
the secular and its truth-claims,
its promise of internal and external goods.
(Saba Mahmood)

Nikhila Henry

A group of bare chested men whipping themselves with blades till they bleed in the midst of a lamenting and chanting crowdmeant to symbolize Matham observed by Shia Muslims on Ashura, the 10th day of Muharram, the first month in the Hijra calendar. Place alost alien, who looks human in the sequence and make him criticise religious practices and God men of a range of faiths in India to complete the jigsaw puzzle -we get PK (2015)- the blockbuster which was appraised for parodying mindless religious fervor and sectarianism in the country.The appeal of PK lies in its lampooning narrative which vacillates between faith which is defined as personal, religion that is at once public and personal and politics that pertains almost always to the public realm. In actuality, PK offers a secular modern plot which gives an upper hand to majoritarian Hindu rightwing politics even as it critiques certain tropes of the same. PK manages this ambivalent position by at once defining certain religious acts including fraud as wrong personal choices and others such as baptism (act of initiation to Christianity) as politically motivated religious intervention. The core of PK can be bared only by reconstructing its narrative starting from the fringes where religious practices, rituals and codes of minority religions in India are critiqued to neatly fit the claims of the majoritarian Hindu rightwing. This ambivalence is maintained as the film takes a personalized yet po-

litically charged stand on religious minorities in the country even as it seldom discusses the politics of Hindutva brigade. In short, in PK, the systematic institutionalization of Varna which makes the word Hindu is synonymous with India, the nation, does not figure.

An attempt to bring out the strands that constitute the Rajkumar Hirani film's narrative brings into focus three realms. One, the personalised realm of faith which is defined as communion between God and a believer, that is similar to the relationship between father and child. The second, the realm of religion which is institutionalised having its structures, idols and God men and the third, the realm of politics where religion plays a role in inciting violence or hatred. What makes PK a palatable mix even for the Hindu rightwing whose men tore down cutouts of Aamir Khan, the lead actor is that, these three realms often coincide to form a single narrative where all religions that are practiced in the country get wrongfully placed on the same 'neutral' platform by virtue of a secular front. What this storytelling brings into existence is a God like figure who rules on good and evil in the modern polity. To its core, PK is haunted by the phantom of the secular modern state.

PK- The Secular Modern Agent

In an interview with Islamic Magazine, Noam Chomsky talks of Secularism thus: "I think that secularism is a vital component of democratic politics, for reasons that seem evident. A secular democracy that upholds human rights is neither pro- nor anti-religion. Rather, it is neutral with regard to personal belief systems"*(2006)*. That PK is not against religion and God is evident as the alien's motive is only to act as a guide in the quest for the 'right' way to belief and worship. In that it upholds "personal belief systems" which support personalised faith. Just like the female protagonist, Jaggu (Anushka Sharma) who longs for her father's approval, PK longs to reach the benevolent God without the aid of intermediaries. This protestant ethics which finds rituals redundant and faith a matter of personal communion with God holds high as its banner, secular nationhood, where all religions and people of faith are ordained equal. Is this effort to maintain the 'secular' nature of nationhood violent in itself? Talal Asad argues that the secularist discourse stands for a set of codified formations which is similar to religion. "I take secularism to be a concept that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life. To appreciate this, it is not enough to show that what appears to be necessary is really contingent- that in certain aspects "the secular" obviously overlaps with the religious"*(2003)*. It is this covert link between the secular and the religious that forms the smooth narrative of PK. Other than being a commentary on religion, PK is also a celluloid narrative of the secular modern. By forcing a narrative that foregrounds equality to group together varied religious communities which face different inclusions and exclusions in the modern state, PK makes in actuality takes a position that some faiths are equal and others are more equal. To understand what makes PK a violently secular film, a look at its take on minority religions in the country is necessary. From the blood and self imposed peril of Matham to the threat alien receives from a Muslim man who is husband of three women to the film's effort to equate all Christian faiths with baptism, PK reinforces almost all of Hindu right wing's worries pertaining to religious minorities in the country.

The politics of PK reflects vividly in its director's statements made in defense of the film. In a press statement, Rajkuamar Hirani, the director of PK said, "Our film is inspired by the ideas of Sant Kabir and Mahatma Gandhi. It is a film which brings to fore the thought that all humans who inhabit this planet are the same. There are no differences. In fact, I have the highest respect for the concept of 'Advait' - the one-

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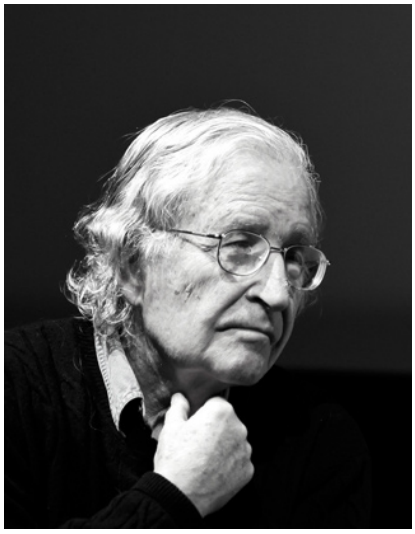

Noam Chomsky

ness of all humans - that is central to Indian culture, thought, and religion…It saddens me to think that a film that upholds this great Hindu principle is accused of being disrespectful of Hinduism." (Hindustan Times, 2015). PK's attempt was thus not just to critique religious practices which are institutionalised and commercial, it was also made to uphold the secular take on religion. This secular modern core also safely places PK on a 'neutral' platform from where religion is looked at as a personal choice similar to the one which Saba Mahmood talks about in her interview forThe Present As History- Critical Perspectives On Contemporary Global Power.

"In modernity religion is conceptualised as a matter of privatized belief, the prime locus of which is the individual (rather than the religious authority, scripture, or tradition), squarely rooted in secular concepts of time, space and causality. The modern individual owes her primary allegiance to the modern state: when and if her religious beliefs intervene with this obligation, the state steps into regulate such behavior often through punitive means. (2007)

PK also defines politics pertaining to the Hindu rightwing as a matter of individual choice. At the same time, it centers its political commentary around minority faiths and their religious authorities. Similar to the intervention that the state makes, PK intervenes and brings its narrative to the realm of politics only to trap religious minorities in the country in a right leaning political commentary. The film that hit theaters during reign of the BJP led NDA government, at a time when the country had seen massive reconversions (Ghar Wapsi)during which hundreds of Muslim and Christian men and women were coerced to adopt the Hindu faith, the film essentially defines conversion as an act linked to Christianity. In one of sequences where religious fraud or as the film calls it "wrong number" is exposed, PK speaks ominously against religious conversion where the Christian church is involved. In a setting which looks rural, a middle aged man talks against a pastor who is believed to have made an attempt to convert the former's kith and kin. "But if God wants me to be a Christian I would have been born in a Christian family," the character states in line with the film's secular credentials. The alien's acceptance of Christianity is also depicted in an act of religious conversion, where PK is seen as being baptized in a church during a song sequence. This seemingly, straight forward critique of religious conversion, draws parallels between the secular state, PK, the gullible yet earnest individual and the Hindu rightwing.

Critiquing the secular take on religion in Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?, Saba Mahmood notes, "… this rather impoverished understanding of images, icons, and sings not only naturalizes a certain concept of a religious subject but also fails to attend to the affective and embodies practices through which a subject comes to relate to a particular sign – a relation founded not only on representation but also on what I will call attachment and cohabitation." (2009) PK not just holds an impoverished understanding of baptism as an icon, it also uses its secular narrative to reengineer meaning of this icon to resonate the concerns of the Hindu rightwing which has been fretting over conversion of Hindus to other faiths. In short, against the backdrop of arson and murder of those converted to Christian faith

PK also defines politics pertaining to the Hindu rightwing as a matter of individual choice. At the same time, it centers its political commentary around minority faiths and their religious authorities. Similar to the intervention that the state makes, PK intervenes and brings its narrative to the realm of politics only to trap religious minorities in the country in a right leaning political commentary.

in Kandhamal, Orrisa, depicting religious conversion by associating it with Christian church creates a political meaning which echoes rightwing concerns that makes Ghar Wapsi a requirement.

PK and The State Statusquo

While the film did catch the ire of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, one for its critique of visible Hindu icons, idols, God men and even practices and two for the intended message that Pakistani men are not out to 'get' Indian women, PK did comfort the Sangh by its selectively political secular narrative which makes a right leaning depiction of minorities possible.

Though the film leads us on to a political take on religious minorities in the country, it maintains Hinduism within the realm of faith where religious fraud is not a political act. In its critique of the Hindu rituals, PK's peeve is only about God-men who create religious divide in the minds of people to "other" Islam. While the other-ing of Islam and Muslims is a political act PK retains a comfortable distance from this politics. Even as organized political forces including RSS, Viswa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu rightwing organisations have clear political agendas in vilifying the Muslim, PK's fraudulent God men focus only on monetary gains. The film strips the act of other-ing of political ends, retaining the act in within the realm of the personal and religious there by maintaining "power"within the reach of dominating Hindu rightwing forces.

The film, ultimately, in its secularist garb, is all about maintenance of existing power structures. G Alosious argues in his Nationalism Without a Nation, "…despite its ubiquitous presence and diverse forms, power tends to organize itself around a single nodal point or principle, settling into a harmonious unity in the form of a cultural specificity over a period of time." (1997). The nodal point of PK is its secular core around which it weaves a web of religious acts that reflect existing power structures to create a unified narrative that pushes to the fringes certain religious expressions of minorities naming them "wrong number". Just as religious extremism is defined by amassing several images, "a series of practices and images that are said to threaten the secular liberal worldview: from suicide bombers, to veiled women, to angry mobs burning books, to preachers pushing intelligent design in schools"(Mahmood, 2009). PK creates and maintains a powerful narrative that others religious minorities in India by playing into the arguments of the Hindu rightwing. PK is the ultimate fantasy of the secular modern state where it gets to define the minorities in the country using the narrative of faith without overturning power structures that be the nation.

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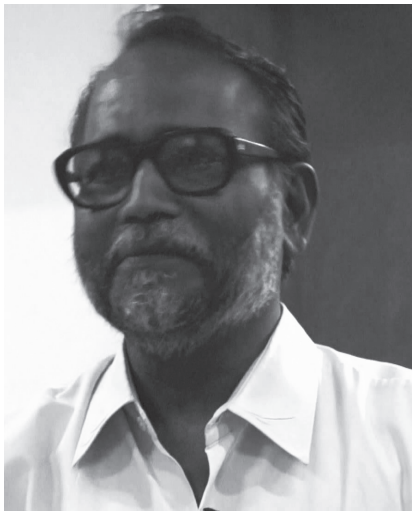
G. Alosious



A church that cannot imagine disrupting the social order is probably not the church. Christianity is essentially disruptive.

Annihilate HOMOPHOBIA

George Zachariah

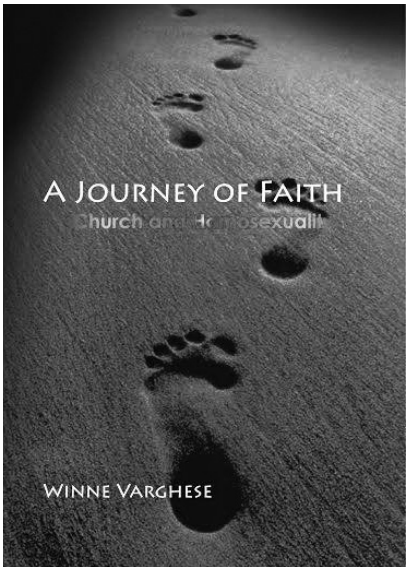
Asking questions and talking back are not virtuous practices in religious communities. When the questions become "indecent", disrupting the time-honoured beliefs and moral codes of the community, the moral policemen of the community intervene and re-enforce the culture of silence to protect and preserve the unjust and irrelevant traditions and beliefs. There are various institutions and programmes to indoctrinate the young generation so that they internalise these abusive doctrinal, scriptural and moral teachings of the community. In spite of all these efforts, heretics emerge, disrupting the "peace" prevailing in the community. They tear the holy veil of silence and expose the untruth that is proclaimed as divinely revealed truth and norm for all. This small book belongs to that heterodox tradition of disruptive theological praxis of raising foundational questions on an "indecent" topic to listen to the voices of the "sinned against" in the homophobic church and society with the vision to create an inclusive world.

Though homosexuality has been practiced in India from time immemorial, it was never condemned or criminalised till the arrival of the British. The sodomy laws enforced by the colonial administration canonised heterosexuality as the normative sexual practice. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code thus came into being in 1860, criminalising deviant sexual behaviors. It is important to remember that the colonial jurisprudence of homophobia was significantly influenced and informed by Judeo-Christian doctrines and Victorian morality. Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for homophobia. Our "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" approach to open discussions on human sexuality in Churches and Christian communities and families continues to propagate heteronormativity as the divinely given natural order for all human beings to follow faithfully.

Ever since the 2009 verdict of the Delhi High Court repealing Section 377 of the IPC, there have been campaigns by Christian organisations to re-criminalise homosexuality. Conservative networks such as Christians against Homosexuality celebrated the recent (12 December 2013) Supreme Court verdict re-criminalising homosexuality as the victory of God over sin and evil. The Senate of Serampore College (University) was also not sufficiently proactive in enabling the students to engage theologically with human sexuality. The recent BD Curriculum Revision process has identified this problem, and the Senate has introduced a new curriculum for BD studies on Human Sexuality, addressing different issues including homophobia. This is a bold step from the part of the Senate of Serampore College (University), and the support of the National Council of Churches in India in developing that syllabus deserves our appreciation. This is the context in which the idea about this book emerged to question courageously the dominant answers of certainty, and to search for new answers, privileging the perspectives of people who have the nerve to transgress heteronormativity. Thanks to Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer, the Secretary of the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (University), for this timely initiative.

The Reverend Winnie Varghese is a comrade who accompanied the Indian Christian communities in their campaign against homophobia since the Delhi High Court verdict in 2009 to de-criminalise homosexuality. She is an Indian-American priest serving the Episcopal Church in the United States. As a lesbian living with her partner in a committed relationship for the last several years, she is an active presence in her church and the Anglican Communion striving courageously to transform the Church

Winnie Varghese



and society into hospitable and welcoming communities for people with different sexual orientations. Winnie Varghese has attended several theological consultations in India on human sexuality, organised by ecumenical and progressive organisations including the National Council of Churches in India and the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College. She has also visited theological colleges and addressed the communities. Both Frontline and Outlook India published her interviews in their special issues on Sec 377. Thank you Winnie for your courage, commitment and solidarity!

The question answer format of this booklet is reader-friendly, and the author's sharp, crisp, unapologetic, and experiential responses are informative, convincing, and transformative. The book categorically dismantles the assumption that homophobia is normal and natural, and instead it convincingly presents homophobia as a social construct and generated ideology. The book affirms the UN position that discriminatory practices based on homophobia are human rights violations and calls for repealing discriminatory laws and social and ecclesial practices. As a minister of the Church, the author affirms the agency of the Church in spearheading the campaign against homophobia. She further challenges Indian Christian communities to critically engage with the resources of our heritage, and contextually reformulate doctrines and faith practices to transform our communities into welcoming and hospitable communities.

Reflecting upon her own experience of coming out, the author observes that, "I think it is a profound truth of the human experience that there are things we know of ourselves. Whether we like them or not, we know things about ourselves. The arrogance of religious and political leaders to tell us that things that are foundational are untrue or perverse is outrageous."This autobiographical reflection provides us radical insights as we accompany our sisters and brothers with different sexual orientation.

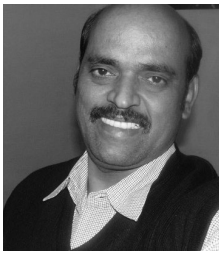
As a minister of the Church, Winnie Varghese challenges pastors and theological students to take their vocation seriously. As she puts it, "The life of faith is risk taking on behalf of people, not dogma or principles; risking our lives, our reputations, our respectability for the dignity of our marginalised brothers and sisters. This is the work of faith; the work that makes us worthy to stand before the altar." She further observes that it is the responsibility of clergy to teach and preach what they discern to be true. "To do less is to take the work of faith too lightly. Appeasing members is insulting to their faith. That does not mean that there cannot be diversity of opinion in a congregation, but fundamentally, respecting the dignity of every human being, which in general means, getting out of the business of telling others what to do is imperative to a Christian community. If we cannot preach and teach this boldly, the communities we have will not be Christian. They might be nice people who pay us, but not in the service of the Gospel." What a profound challenge to the ministers of the body of Christ!

The book further provides us new hermeneutical keys to engage with scripture and tradition. It presents "disturbing" perspectives on marriage and family. It does not valorise homosexuals; rather it challenges us to introspect our homophobic theologies and ethics and church practices, and to create alternative manifestations of ekklesia by loving and welcoming the stranger and the outcaste unconditionally. As Winnie Varghese observed elsewhere, "a church that cannot imagine disrupting the social order is probably not the church. Christianity is essentially disruptive." The purpose of this book is to create that blessed unrest in all of us to become disruptive so that through us the Church will become a disruptive presence in the society to annihilate homophobia and ideologies and practices of exclusion. It is our commitment to become disruptive that makes this book relevant.

Dr. George Zachariah *serves The United Theological College Bangalore as professor in the department of theology and ethics. He is the author of 'Alternatives unincorporathed: Earth ethics from the grassroots.'*

SRILANKA
POST ELECTION SCENARIO AND THE FUTURE OF TAMILS

Maithripala Sirisena



Selvaraj Arulnathan

"First they came for the Socialists,
and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade
Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I
did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there
was no one left to speak for me".
-pastor Martin Niemöller
(1892–1984)

The just concluded General Elections of Sri Lanka which unseated the former President, Mahinda Rajapaksha bringing in one of his cabinet ministers Mr. Maithripala Sirisena who clinched a huge victory by his grand coalition and towering promises has surfaced a lot of emotional packages ranging from highly positive to serious suspicion. Though there is certainly greater and safer feeling among different ethnic and religious groups especially among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, history warrants very cautious and careful approach to the policies, priorities and the national alliances both within and outside. At the outset, there is a general feeling that Sirisena won't be as fiendish as Rajapaksha against ethnic minorities. This has created a lot of enthusiasm, excitement and also hope among different sections and also serious expectations also on matters which are still irksome to its people and the world nations. On the one hand there is greater hope that the situation of the Tamils will improve for a safer and stronger life settlement which was also one of the electoral promises by which he bagged such a

huge victory. At the same time there is also legitimate suspicion about his genuineness as has been part of the previous government which engineered ethnic genocide and imposed iron curtain policy insulating the country from any foreign agencies to disclose what was happening in the country against the Tamils. Even now, his clear stand that the state will not allow any foreign or external agency to probe into what had happened towards the end the civil war, but would conduct a free and fair inquiry on all the ethnic cleansing.

But for me, the more serious problem is not about the state policy or even the personal integrity and genuineness of the President. Though we may not expect him to fulfil his promises hundred percent, he will certainly be better "unknown angel" than the "known devil", Mahinda Rajapaksha. That is not the real issue that lies before the different ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka. It is first and foremost how these different ethnic minorities look at themselves towards a lasting futuristic solution and what is the roadmap that they jointly carve out towards their wellbeing is the real issue that one needs to approach. As such, the ethnic rivalry of Sri Lanka is a long chequered history of animosity, suspicion, treachery, and so on. As a result of this, ethnic amity has become more and more complex and complicated. This has been further intrigued and conspired by the topsy-turvy political changes in the island. Unless all these different dimensions are taken into serious consideration and a fool proof roadmap towards Pan Lankan political coalition and ethnic inclusivism worked out, a temporary, piece-meal solution will only cover up the long and pestering wound which might even destroy the cohesion and sovereignty of the nation, people and its future.

It calls for a clear understanding of different ethnic minorities in the land and their historical, political, social background vis-à-vis the current situation in Sri Lanka.

i.Topography

Though Sri Lanka looks like a small island lying southeast of India, it has a population of 21,416,445 according the 2014 statistics (down from 21,481,334 in 2013), with the most dense areas lying in the urban centres such as the capital, Colombo, and other large cities which are also the industrial and economic hubs of the country. It is growing at a rate of 0.913% annually and houses people from different ethnicities and religions, which gives the country a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic identity.

Sri Lanka has a documented history that spans over 3,000 years, but there are theories to suggest that Sri Lanka had pre-historic human settlements dating back to at least 125,000 years Its geographic location and deep harbours made it of great strategic importance from the time of the ancient Silk Road through to World War II. Sri Lanka is a diverse country, home to many religions, ethnicities and languages. It is the land of the Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Moors, Indian Tamils, Burghers, Malays, Kaffirs and the aboriginal Vedda. Sri Lanka has a rich Buddhist heritage, and the first known Buddhist writings of Sri Lanka, the Pāli Canon, dates back to the Fourth Buddhist Council in 29 BC.

Sri Lanka is a republic and a unitary state governed by a presidential system. The legislative capital, Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, is a suburb of the commercial capital, and largest city, of Colombo. It is also an important producer of tea, coffee, gemstones, coconuts, rubber, and the native cinnamon, the island contains tropical forests and diverse landscapes with a high amount of biodiversity. The country has had a long history of international engagement, as a founding member of SAARC and a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the G77, and the Non-Aligned Movement. It is the only country in South Asia that is currently rated "high" on the Human Development Index. It is also very important to have some knowledge about the different ethnic groups both the majority and the minorities so that it becomes easier to locate the problem and try to seek for solution that will be long and agreeable to all.

ii. Sinhalese

Sri Lanka is a country of multiple ethnicities, but the two most prominent are the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sinhalese make up around 74% of the total population and are concentrated in the central and south western parts of the country. They are the descendants of 4th century B.C. Buddhist immigrants from northwest India.

Their language belongs to the Indo-European family. Most Sinhalese are agriculturalists. The low-country Sinhalese of the southern and western coastal regions have been heavily influenced by European culture, while the Kandyan Sinhalese of the highlands are more traditional. The Sinhalese are Theravada Buddhists except for a Christian minority. Like other peoples of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese constitute a caste-based society with a complex structure historically founded largely on occupation. Differences in religious and other customary practices are minimal between the castes. Marriage is generally endogamous within the same caste, with spouses drawn preferably from the children of the mother's brother or father's sister. Monogamy is the rule, as polygyny and polyandry were declared illegal in the mid-19th century

iii. Sri Lankan Tamils

Sri Lankan Tamils are a section of Tamil people who are natives of the South Asian island state of Sri Lanka. According to anthropological and archaeological evidences, Sri Lankan Tamils have a very long history in Sri Lanka. They are said to have been living on the island since around the 2nd century BCE. Most modern Sri Lankan Tamils claim descent from residents of Jaffna Kingdom, a former kingdom in the north of the island and Vannimai chieftaincies from the east. They constitute a majority in the Northern Province, live in significant numbers in the Eastern Province, and are in the minority throughout the rest of the country. 70% of Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka live in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Although Sri Lankan Tamils are culturally and linguistically distinct, genetic studies indicate that they are closely related to Sinhalese ethnic group in the island. The Sri Lankan Tamils are mostly Hindus with a significant Christian population. Sri Lankan Tamil literature on topics including religion and the sciences flourished during the medieval period in the court of the Jaffna Kingdom

Since Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain in 1948, relations between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil communities have been strained. Rising ethnic and political tensions, along with ethnic riots in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983, led to the formation and strengthening of militant groups advocating independence for Tamils. The ensuing civil war resulted in the deaths of more than 100,000 people and the forced disappearance of thousands of others. The civil war ended in 2009 but there are continuing allegations of atrocities being committed by the Sri Lankan Military and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam during its final months . A

20th century Sri Lankan Moors

United Nations panel found that as many as 40,000 civilians may have been killed in the final months of the civil war . The end of the civil war has not improved conditions in Sri Lanka, with press freedom not being restored and judiciary coming under political control.

One-third of Sri Lankan Tamils now live outside Sri Lanka. While there was significant migration during the British colonial period, the civil war led to more than 800,000 Tamils leaving Sri Lanka, and many have left the country for destinations such as Canada, India and Europe as refugees .

iv. Muslims (Moors and Malays)

Another important minority community is Muslims (both Moors and Malays) who compose about 7% of the population. They practice Sunni Islam. Formerly they were even more. Accordingly, Sri Lankan Moors (commonly referred to as Muslims) are the third largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka, comprising 9.23% of the country's total population. They are native speakers of the Tamil language and predominantly followers of Islam. While some sources describe them as a subset of the Tamil people who had adopted Islam as their religion and spoke Tamil as their mother tongue, which they continue to do so , other sources trace their ancestry to Arab traders (Moors) who settled in Sri Lanka sometime between the 8th and 15th

centuries. The Arabic language brought by the early merchants is no longer spoken, though many Arabic words and phrases are still commonly used. Until the recent past, the Moors employed Arwi as their native language, though this is also extinct as a spoken language. Moors today use Tamil as their primary language, with influence from Arabic. Those from central and southern Sri Lanka also widely use Sinhala.

iv. Indian Tamils

There is another ethnic group which went to Sri Lanka during the British regime as indentured labourer is the fourth major ethnic group. They are in the hills in tea plantations. The Upcountry Tamils were brought by the British at the beginning of the 19th century from South India to work on the British plantations. The first batch of Tamil labourers came around 1823 from Tamil Nadu, the then Madras Presidency. In two more decades, the Indian Tamils will complete two centuries of habitation in Sri Lanka. They have toiled on the Tea, rubber and coconut plantations to make Ceylon prosperous under gruelling and inhuman conditions.

Although tea has become a mainstay of the Sri Lankan economy, it has not always grown on the island. British colonists introduced it and developed tea plantations in the high country, the mountainous central part of the island. Pedro Estate is one of the oldest plantations, and like all the others it employs the descendants of the Indian Tamil workforce brought by the British from Tamil Nadu in south India.

Sri Lankan Tamils, who have lived on the islands for thousands of years, look down on them because they come from lower castes. "Tamils would rather marry Sinhalese than tea plantations Tamils," explains Amal Jayasinghe, the Agence France Press bureau chief in Colombo. Ignored by both sides, they are victims of the conflict. "The Tamils, they think we are not like them," says Jagian Morgan, a field officer at the estate, "and the government does not help us because ethnically we are Tamils."

Ponnambalam Ramanathan

In a paper presented to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1888, Ramanathan said the Tamil-speaking Muslims share more than just a language with the Tamils. He provided clinching evidence of the Tamil cultural features of the Tamil-speaking Muslims in the island. He pointed to Tamil customs such as tying the Tali, the eating of Patchoru, and the use of Alatti, that were prevalent among the Tamil-speaking Muslims. Many Sri Lankan Muslim names such as Periya Marikkar and Sinna Lebbe are clearly Tamil. Also, he said that the Tamil Hindus and the Tamil-speaking Muslims were physically indistinguishable.

After Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, tea plantation Tamils were even denied Sri Lankan citizenship – an injustice that has since been corrected, but remains deeply anchored in their mentality. Even they consider themselves as underclass citizens. In accordance with a 1964 agreement with India, Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 230,000 "stateless" Indian Tamils in 1988. Under the pact, India granted citizenship to the remainder, some 200,000 of whom now live in India. Another 75,000 Indian Tamils, who themselves or whose parents once applied for Indian citizenship, now wish to remain in Sri Lanka. The government has stated these Tamils will not be forced to return to India, although they are not technically citizens of Sri Lanka.

These are the four major ethnic groups that occupy Sri Lanka today: the Sinhalese, the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Tamil Muslims and the Uphill Tamils. While Sinhalese form totally different ethnic groups, the other three communities are one and the same as they all take their origin to Tamil country in South India, but remain different and even inimical to one another in the name of historicity of their presence in Sri Lanka, caste origin and religious orientations. But the main problem is caste as the Sri Lankan Tamils claim themselves as dominant caste Tamils while the other two groups are relegated to lower caste status. Though the Muslims in Sri Lanka claim themselves as Moors, as the descendants of Arabs, more and more studies show that they are originally lower caste Hindus from South India who converted to Islam after they migrated to Sri Lanka.

In 1885, Ponnambalam Ramanathan stated in a speech to the Ceylon Legislative Council that the Tamil-speaking Muslims are low caste Hindus who converted to Islam. According to him, the Ceylon Moors, as the Sri Lankan Muslims were then called, were Muslim by religion and Tamil by ethnicity.

In a paper presented to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1888, Ramanathan said the Tamil-speaking Muslims share more than just a language with the Tamils. He provided clinching evidence of the Tamil cultural features of the Tamil-speaking Muslims in the island. He pointed to Tamil customs such as tying the Tali, the eating of Patchoru, and the use of Alatti, that were prevalent among the Tamil-speaking Muslims. Many Sri Lankan Muslim names such as Periya Marikkar and Sinna Lebbe are clearly Tamil. Also, he said that

the Tamil Hindus and the Tamil-speaking Muslims were physically indistinguishable. From the above accounts, it is clear that the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Moors and the Uphill Tamils are all culturally and ethnically one and the same groups, the South Indian Tamils. The difference is only in their caste, religion and historicity. While the Sri Lankan Tamils are the first migrants to Sri Lanka either around the same time of the Indo-Aryan Sinhalese, or soon after their migration, the Tamil Muslims were said to have gone there around 7th or 8th century AD. The Uphill Tamils were taken in the beginning of the 19th Century AD. Today they are considered as three different and even distinct ethnic group which has been one of the main reasons for their slavery in Sri Lanka. Though historians, political analysts and even Tamil scholars are aware both in India and Sri Lanka, not many speak this out loudly, much less take initiative to unify them. This is the crux of the problem.

As a result of this, Sri Lankan Tamils claim superiority and historical legacy to stake hold entirely the credit and claim for Tamil Elam, Tamil Muslims gradually disowned their Tamil identity and moved closely towards Sinhalese under garb of Ceylon Moors and the Uphill Tamils have been completely cut off from these two groups both physically, economically, political and socially bearing the brunt of all burdens and sufferings. If only they come together as one ethnic and linguistic category and claim for their freedom and selfhood along with statehood, much good can come about. Since it is not happening, they have been kept aside as different ethnic groups and it has been easy for the Sri Lankan majoritarian political agenda to divide them and crush them.

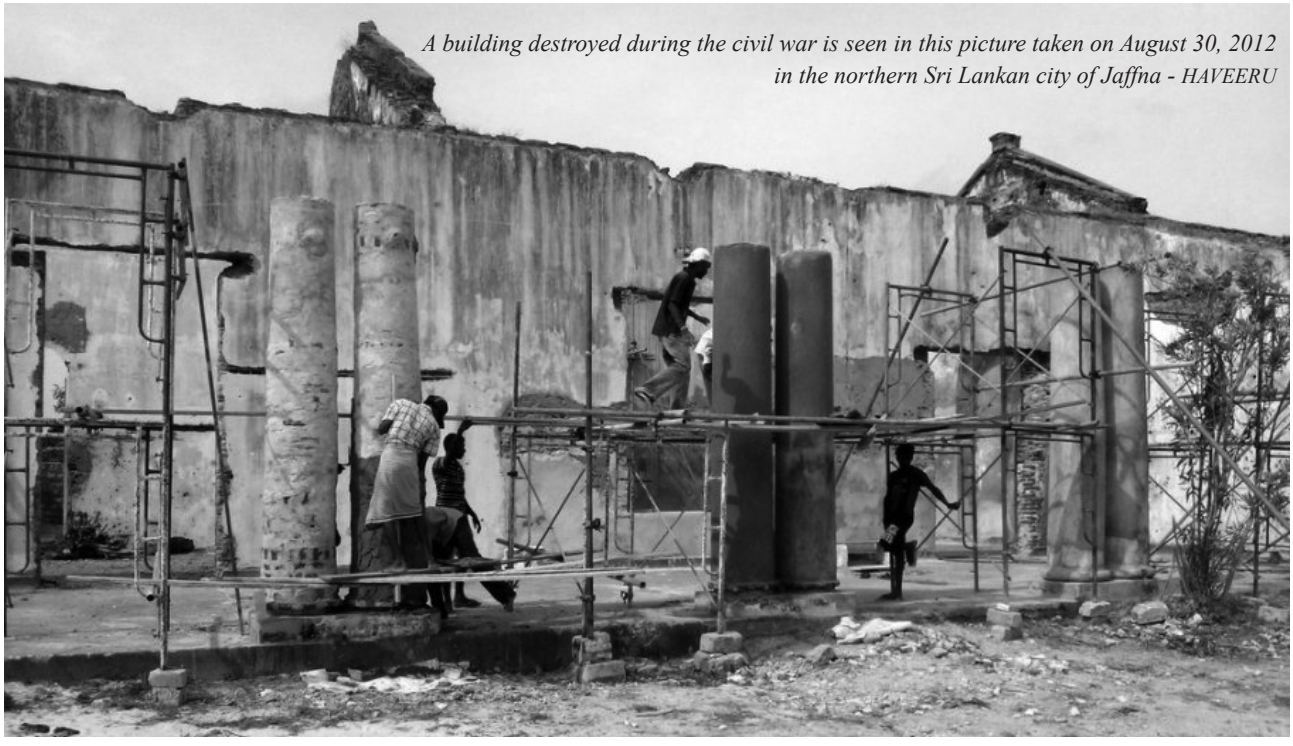
CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

i. The civil war is far from over

The civil war that lasted for about a quarter of a century has, in a way, come to an end killing more than 300,000 civilians mainly from the Sri Lankan Tamil community. In May 2009, the Sri Lankan army captured the last of the areas controlled by the militant separatist organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. On May 18, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared that the civil war, which claimed the lives of some 100,000 people, had finally ended. But it has left trail of events, heart burns, loss of loved ones, homes, their lands, their everything. People are still in squalid temporary settlements and tents which threaten their life every bit.

The real and ground situation is far from any happy ending, rather left people with more fear, more questions, more uncertainty and has anchored them in an inconsolable arena. According to the United Nations, some 40,000 people died in the last months of the war. International aid agencies reported that around 280,000 people - mostly belonging to the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern regions - were displaced by the war, and forced to live in crowded refugee camps.

Mr. Jehan Perera, a researcher at the non-governmental organization The National Peace Council states that the political situation in Sri Lanka has improved significantly, "Life in Sri Lanka has improved for the vast majority of people, especially for those who don't live in the former war zones in the north and east as they no longer have to fear roadside bombings," Perera told DW. The expert pointed out, however, that in the Tamil-majority areas, people continue to live under difficult circum-



A building destroyed during the civil war is seen in this picture taken on August 30, 2012 in the northern Sri Lankan city of Jaffna - HAVEERU

stances due to the heavy presence of the military, which also administers the regions. According to Perera, poverty is rampant in Sri Lanka's Tamil areas and that there is a lack of accommodation and income opportunities for the people living there.

ii. No decentralization

A political solution to the problem is far from any satisfactory turn. In 2013, the largest Tamil party won the provincial council elections in the Tamil-dominated areas. These were the first elections in these regions in decades. Analysts say the fact that the Sri Lankan government allowed the vote was a very positive sign and a step towards greater democracy. However, the central government has refused to accept the provincial councils' authority. "That the vote actually took place was a great achievement. But it is not enough to hold elections; it is also necessary that the central Sri Lankan government transfer power to the elected representatives of the Tamil people," said Perera." The real power lies with the governor of the province, who is appointed by the president. The devolution of power must take place. It has not taken place."

For the Tamil people, political participation is necessary for reconciliation. Observers are of the view that development projects alone cannot be a remedy. On the other hand, ties between the majority Buddhist Sinhalese and the minority Hindu Tamils are still characterized by mistrust. "Sri Lanka is still in a post-war stage rather than in a post-conflict stage. The root of the conflict has not been dealt with," said Perera.

iii. Dealing with the past

The Tamils also demand answers from the government about the fate of their relatives who disappeared during the war. For them, it is a prerequisite for reconciliation.

"People want to know what has happened to their loved ones," Perera said. "They still think that those still missing may not be dead, that they may be hidden away in some army camp or prison. And there is really no way for them to find out."

The international pressure forced the Sri Lankan government to form a "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission" (LLRC), which recommended the establishment of an independent investigation body to clarify the fate of the missing persons. But so far, there hasn't been any report on the issue.

International human rights organizations have accused both the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE separatists of committing war crimes, including targeting the civilians, abductions, and executions of combatants and prisoners. Human Rights Watch and the Amnesty International have criticized the current reconciliatory approach of the government. "At present, there is no credible reconciliation process in the South Asian country," Human Rights Watch said in 2013 in its annual report about Sri Lanka. "For five years, the victims have awaited justice, and for the people responsible for war crimes be held accountable," it added.

WAHT IS AHEAD?

First of all, all the minorities who are actually one and the same group as regards their ethnicity and language should unite itself. They should keep aside their historical legacy, caste and religious identity to their private and personal quarters, but come as one ethnic whole in the social, political realms to claim their political and ethnic uniqueness which should be respected, recognized in their political and public spheres and allow them for their political statehood. Unification of all Tamils is a must for this. Unless and until this doesn't happen, no plausible solution is possible. Indian sympathizers who fight for the separate statehood for the Tamils in Sri Lanka should also keep this in mind. What they have been doing so far, is transferring their caste, divisive mindset that is prevalent in Tamil land. This has blocked their eyes and perverted their mind from seeing all Tamils in Sri Lanka as one single whole. This is the first step towards any appreciable solution to the ethnic conflict and struggle in Sri Lanka.

The second, is that they should, as they do now approach the international communities, aid agencies, human rights watch NGOs, and other governments to unearth all the wrongs done to their sisters and brothers who have been kept in torture chambers, war- houses, and release them from their hideouts and release their fetters from all shackles.

Thirdly, they should along with Indian and international governments, should initiate economic development, employment opportunities and educational facilities so that the future generation becomes self-dependent. This should start from the Uphill Tamils as they are the most marginalized in all the human development scales.

Fourthly, all Tamils together should challenge the BBS, a Sri Lankan version of RSS which is pushing its agenda of ethnic cleansing by targeting first the Tamil Muslims which, if not checked and terminated will spread to other ethnic groups. Tamil Muslims should be protected from all these outlandish activities of BBS.

And, finally caste, religion and language have been the three arch enemies of development, peace and reconciliation in South Asia especially in the last two centuries. While it is very difficult to do away with these three dragons in life, they should be controlled and confined to one's personal and private life. What is most important is justice, peace and liberation. To achieve these, Tamils in Sri Lanka should set aside their caste, religious and historical pride and move together as one community of minority in Sri Lanka to gain their legitimate identity as Tamil minority.

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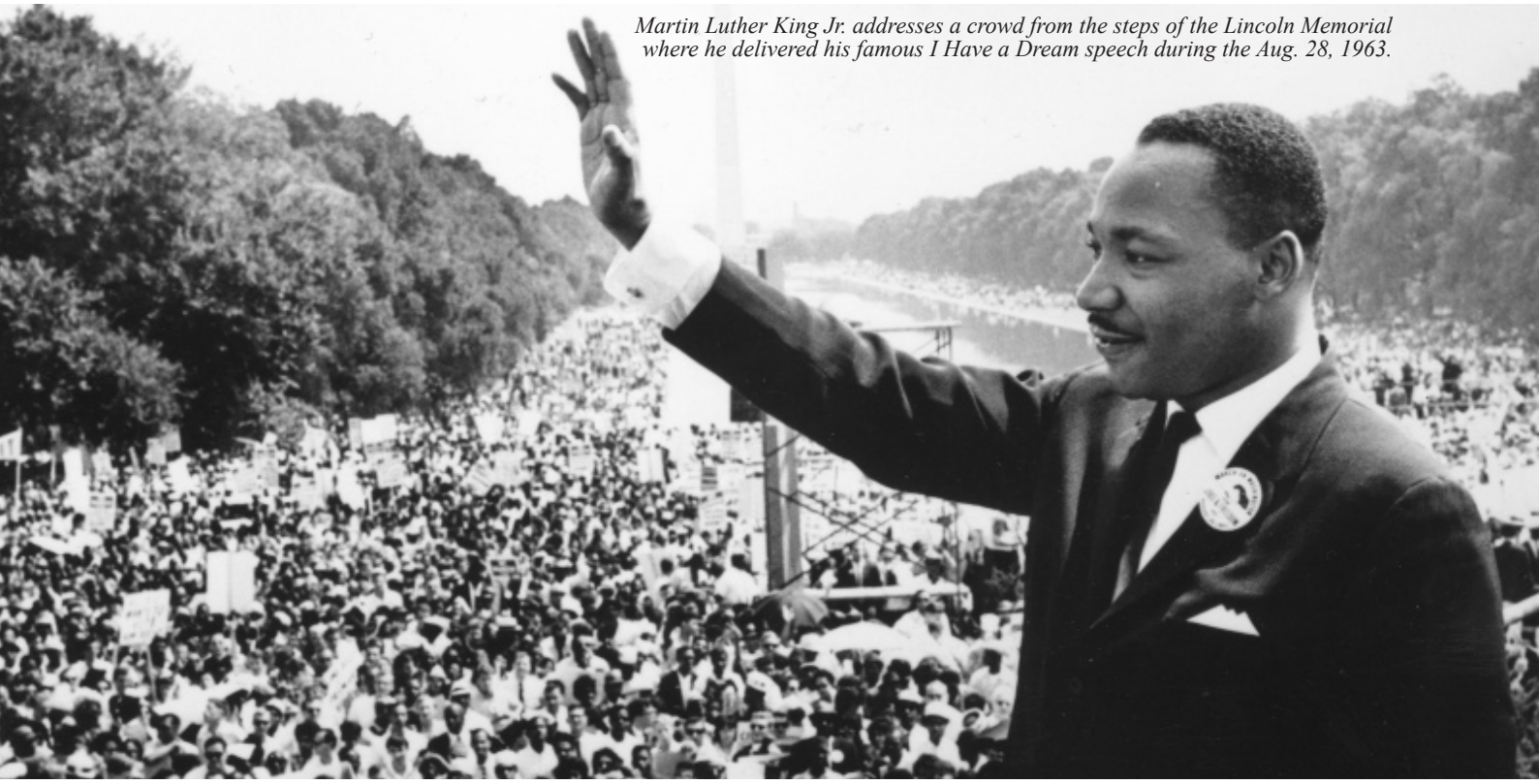
Embodying Prophetic Leadership

Lessons from the #Blacklivesmatter Movement

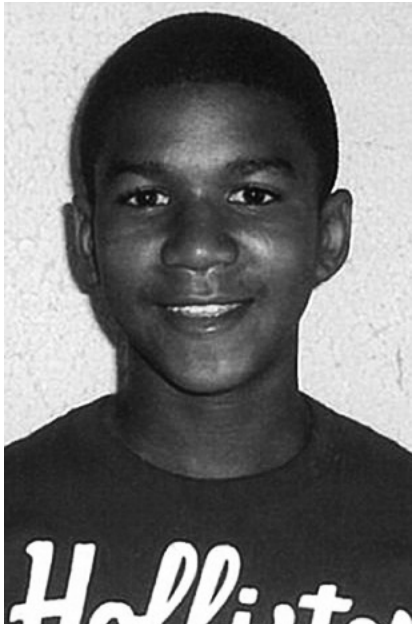
Jennifer Bailey

On February 10, 1959, American Civil Rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. arrived in Mumbai for a ten-day journey he would later call one of the most concentrated and eye-opening experiences of his life.[1] The Indian independence struggle had long been a source of inspiration for King in his own work to assure the democratic rights of African Americans in the Southern United States. In his writings, King often sighted the Indian example as the guiding light that shaped the technique of non-violent social change that would come a defining part of his legacy.

When he arrived in India, King was already an international celebrity having successfully led the 381-day Montgomery Bus Boycott. Of the similarities between the freedom struggles in both nations King was sharp in his analysis, "And then there is, even here, the problem of segregation. We call it race in America; they call it caste in India. In both places it means that some are considered inferior, treated as though they deserve less."[2] King left the country more convinced than ever that non-violence resistance was most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. Today, 56 years after King's journey, the struggle for racial equality continues in the United States. The events of 2014, beginning with the death of unarmed black teen Michael Brown at the hands of local law enforcement, did more than off



Martin Luther King Jr. addresses a crowd from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where he delivered his famous I Have a Dream speech during the Aug. 28, 1963.



Trayvon Benjamin Martin

The #blacklivesmatter movement, as it has come to be called, was created in 2012 after the murder of another African-American teen, Martin's killer George Zimmerman was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17-year old Trayvon was post-humously placed on trial for his own murder as media outlets framed the boy as a "thug" and "menace" for walking though his neighborhood wearing a hooded sweatshirt and carrying a bag of candy. In the United States, blackness in any form is perceived as a threat to the social structures meant to serve and protect whites.

a national debate about the police behavior, the criminal justice system, and structural inequality in the United States. They put a magnifying glass on the festering sore at the heart of American democracy: the sin of racism.

The problem of racial violence in the United States predates the founding of the Republic. Since the first ship carrying the bodies of enslaved Africans arrived off the shores of Virginia in 1616, black lives have been devalued and discarded has less than human. Thus the declaration by contemporary activists that #blacklivesmatter is both deeply subversive and inherently counterculture. To state that black lives, in particular, have worth and value is to take a stand against 400 years of American history that claimed that black bodies are things to be owned and not inhabited.

The #blacklivesmatter movement, as it has come to be called, was created in 2012 after the murder of another African-American teen, Trayvon Martin.[3] Martin's killer George Zimmerman was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17-year old Trayvon was post-humously placed on trial for his own murder as media outlets framed the boy as a "thug" and "menace" for walking though his neighborhood wearing a hooded sweatshirt and carrying a bag of candy. In the United States, blackness in any form is perceived as a threat to the social structures meant to serve and protect whites. The movement has four specific demands:

- Develop a network of organizations and advocates to form a national policy specifically aimed at redressing the systemic pattern of anti-black law enforcement violence in the US.[4]

- Discontinue its supply of military weaponry and equipment to local law enforcement. And though Congress seems to finally be considering measures in this regard, it remains essential to monitor the demilitarization processes and the corporate sectors that financially benefit from the sale of military tools to police.[5]

- Release the names of all officers involved killing black people within the last five years, both while on patrol and in custody, so they can be brought to justice – if they haven't already.[6]

- Decrease law-enforcement spending at the local, state and federal levels and a reinvestment of that budgeted money into the black communities most devastated by poverty in order to create jobs, housing and schools. This money should be redirected to those federal departments charged with providing employment, housing and educational services.[7]

These demands are meant to curb the trend in state-sanctioned violence against African Americans, but also speak to broader social inequities plaguing black communities including the highest rates of poverty, incarceration, and health disparities of any racial group in the nation.

As a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), the oldest historically African-American Christian denomination in the world, the #blacklivesmatter movement resonates deeply with my theological worldview. As black liberation theologian and fellow A.M.E. minister James Cone poignantly notes in his essay A Black Theology of Liberation, "The task of Black Theology then is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of oppressed black people-so they will see the gospel as inseparable from their humiliated condition, bestowing on them the necessary power to break the chains of oppression."[8] Reading Christianity through the lens of the Black Theology and the #blacklivesmatter movement invites us to see our God as one who loves and stands in solidarity with those whom man despises and claims as insignificant. This mode of theological interpretation calls on the God of the Exodus. It plays emphasis on a manifestation of the Holy One as a liberator who is actively working with us and through us to free us from the bondage of persecution and systemic injustice. God, our liberator through the life and ministry of Jesus, calls us to do more than church as usual.

Faith leaders across the United States have taken this message to heart. After the acquittal of Darren Wilson, the officer who killed Michael Brown, leaders from over 30 denominations across lines of race came together for Black Lives Mat-

Protesters march in downtown Sanford, Florida, where Trayvon Martin was killed.

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

ter Sunday on December 14th, 2014. Together these denominations represent over 45 million American Christians. Encouraging their congregants to wear all black in solidarity with the #blacklivesmatter movement, pastors across the country called for a special prayer that Sunday asking God's presence and protection over the lives of Black men. This unprecedented multi-racial action demonstrated the power of #blacklivesmatter to heal deep seated racial wounds and penetrate Sunday morning services which Dr. King once called the most segregated hour in America.

Since that Sunday, the faith-led solidarity work has continued in ecumenical and interfaith coalitions. Clergy have staged protests in the halls of state and federal government offices and worked with other movements to advocate for policies that make the demands of the #blacklivesmatter movement into law. This is prophetic work. In the biblical text, prophets were those who risked their significance to speak God's truth. The truth that must be spoken in the United States today is that we will no longer allow the terrors of racism to shame us into silence. We will be heard.

Four years after his visit to India, Dr. King was arrested for leading nonviolent protests against segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. While imprisoned, he wrote as A Letter from Birmingham Jail an essay directed to other local clergy who opposed the tactics of the movement. His words echo across the generations:

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.[9]

His words form my prayer for the struggle against racial injustice in the United States today. May God's will be done. Amen.

1. Martin Luther King Jr., *"My Trip to the Land of Ghandi,"* Ebony Magazine, July 1959, accessed February 10, 2015, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol5/July1959_MyTriptotheLandofGandhi.pdf.

2. Ibid.

3. *"About Us,"* Black Lives Matter Website, accessed February 10, 2015, http://blacklivesmatter.com/about.

4. *"Demands,"* Black Lives Matter Website, accessed February 10, 2015, http://blacklivesmatter.com/demands.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. J. Phillip Wogaman (ed.), Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 359.

9. Martin Luther King Jr., *"Letter from Birmingham Jail,"* accessed February 10, 2015, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/liberation_curriculum/pdfs/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw.pdf.

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